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THE WORKS

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LIMITED EDITION

VOL. VIII.

THE EVANGELIST

Of the LIMITED EDITION of Alphonse Daudet one thousand copies have been printed for America.

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THE WORKS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

THE EVANGELIST

TRANSLATED BY

OLIVE EDWARDS PALMER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM P. TRENT

ILLUSTRATED BY G. BOURGAIN

BOSTON
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INTRODUCTION.

IT is not a little curious that Daudet's most pessimistic, not to say tragical, story should have followed immediately upon his greatest success in the sphere of pure comedy. *Numa Roumestan*, which contains so much of the true spirit of Molière, appeared in 1881; *L'Évangéliste* was published in the early part of 1883. The more sombre story, as critics have not failed to observe, gave proof of Daudet's marked growth in psychological analysis as well as in artistic power. He had, of course, taken great interest in his characters since the writing of *Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné*, but he had also been greatly interested in their setting and in the special scenes in which his faculty of description was given full play. A certain idealization and a desire to balance good and bad characters, tragic and idyllic scenes, had also been apparent. In other words, his gravitation toward the Naturalistic School had been slow; he had written poems, dramas, stories, romances, loosely constructed novels, rather than studies. He had been a scenic and dramatic artist rather than a psychologist with a mission to reform mankind.

L'Évangéliste, however, was expressly intended by its author to be an "observation" in morbid psychology, and was appropriately dedicated to the illustrious Charcot. The humorist and Provençal poet in Daudet had for the time been entirely submerged — there was not even a trace of the ebullient South in the story — and he had apparently thrown in his lot with Zola and the Naturalists for good and all. *Sapho*, which appeared the next year (1884), left no doubt as to the new affiliation, which not even the humor of *Tartarin sur les Alpes* could seriously disturb. Then came the period of nervous breakdown when satire began to supplant humor, even in the Tartarin series, and genial good nature was exchanged for the utterly alien ferocity of *L'Immortel* (1889) — that truculent and undeserved attack upon the French Academy. Thus we see that *L'Évangéliste* marked a new period in Daudet's art — a period which disease did not allow to culminate naturally. If he had had fifteen years of good health given him after 1883, there is no telling what, with all his varied powers and his essentially wholesome sweet nature, he might not have made of his studies in realistic psychology, for he had already shown himself a past master of observation. But fortune was unkind to him and what promised to be a period of fresh and purposeful activity became rather one of decadence and morbidity.

Perhaps to many English readers decadence and morbidity are to be found in full measure in

L'Évangéliste and *Sapho.* We need not try to say a good word here for the latter story, but we must protest that such a verdict with regard to the powerful book we are now examining would be distinctly unjust. That *L'Évangéliste* is to a great extent pessimistic, that it is extremely sad, that it contains not a single thoroughly noble character, and hence lacks positive inspiration toward the higher side of life and conduct must be frankly admitted. It must be granted, on the other hand, that the moral indignation that prompted Daudet to write his book kept him from making it a morbid or a decadent one. A governess of his own son had been made the victim of hypnotic influences used for religious purposes and he had known of other cases. With such data and with his natural hatred of all hypocrisy and other antisocial vices it is no wonder that his fervid imagination should have worked out the sad story as we have it, and that he should not have endeavored to correct the one-sided impression it was almost sure to produce. Profound moral indignation joined with great literary art may not suffice to make a book that will please every one, but the combination cannot fail to make a book that the capable reader will profit by.

The chief profit to be derived from a careful perusal of *L'Évangéliste* is easy to specify. No thoughtful reader of the story is ever likely to develop in his own person a spirit of exaggerated "other worldliness," or to tolerate its development

in others. For it is extreme "other worldliness," not a normal and warranted religious zeal, much less genuine piety, that is the object of Daudet's wrath. The finest character in his book, the old clergyman Aussandon — who would be truly noble were he not represented as being absurdly henpecked — not only stands for genuine religion and proves that Daudet has no quarrel with it, but is also a Protestant, and thus relieves Daudet of the charge of unfairness toward a faith not strong in France. The English or the American Protestant need not therefore see in *L'Évangéliste* an attack upon cherished principles, unless either of them is inclined to espouse the cause of that most odious of religious fanatics, Mme. Autheman. Nor need the Roman Catholic think that Daudet is unfair to him in his delineation of the weak, religious sensualist, Henrietta Briss. Whatever his own private views in such matters, Daudet was too tolerant a man and too thorough an artist to have undertaken to write a book attacking Christianity itself. He wished instead to expose religious fanaticism, and he was impartial enough to show that weak and bad characters could be produced within the Catholic as well as within the Protestant fold.

In one important respect, however, he failed to be impartial. If he had treated human life fairly instead of looking fixedly at certain unpleasant features of it, he would have balanced his detestable characters by at least a few personages worthy of our thorough admiration. This he has not done,

and he has thereby weakened the artistic effect of his book, because he has not given us a full and rounded view of life. It is true that Aussandon does rise to heroism, that Mme. Ebsen is a pathetic figure, that Lorie-Dufresne is amiable, that Romain and Sylvanire are faithful servants; but, taken together, they do not produce one-tithe of the impression made by that iron-willed fanatic, Mme. Autheman, while the weakness of Éline, the heroine, serves to bring into still fuller relief the unpleasant dominant conception of the book. But while all this may be unfair to human nature as well as to true art, it adds to the effectiveness of the story as a warning and deterrent. Daudet exaggerates, yet so did Mrs. Stowe in the great novel that led to the downfall of slavery. The main desideratum in all such fiction with a purpose is that the reader should be made to think that the specific injustice can exist, and that he should be stimulated to the resolve that he will do his best to counteract its evil influences.

From this point of view it is idle to deny that *L'Évangéliste* is a great and moving book. Our sympathies are first aroused for the simple household formed by Éline and her mother, and they are subsequently extended to Lorie and his motherless children. Then, slowly but surely, the hard, resolute character of that conqueror of souls, Mme. Autheman, is set before us, and we foresee the fatal results of the influence she is destined to exert upon Éline. If for a moment the idea

of a religious association of a peculiar character in the midst of modern Paris makes us think of Balzac's *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine*, we soon perceive that Daudet has discovered a more realistic and absorbing theme. We follow each step of the sad drama with breathless interest, and when all the poor mother's efforts to retain her child have been thwarted by the gold of the Authemans, when the religious hypnotist is left master of the situation and secure of the reputation of a saint, when finally we close the book with the last parting of poor, broken-down Mme. Ebsen and her misguided daughter, we do not stop to ask whether such things often happen, but we search our own hearts in order to discover and expel even the least trace of fanaticism and we resolve that we will do our best to drive it from the hearts of others. But this is merely to say that Daudet has not only written a book with lifelike characters and a closely knit plot, a book that impresses the imagination profoundly, but that he has also written a moral book that impresses the heart.

Space is waiting for comment on special scenes or passages, nor can we dwell on the subordinate characters, some of whom are interesting. It is worth while to notice, however, that although *L'Évangéliste* undoubtedly marks the beginning of a new period of artistic development for its author, it also holds by his previous works in many interesting particulars. Although its plot is more closely knit than usual it contains such

a specially worked up scene as that in which Aussandon refuses the communion to Mme. Autheman, and we thus perceive that the author of *Le Nabab* has not lost his cunning. Again the toilsome journey of Mme. Ebsen reminds us of similar pilgrimages made by Claire Fromont and by Jack. More striking still is the fact that Daudet must have his fling at the unsuccessful — the failures. Lorie-Dufresne, the under-prefect who has lost his place, takes his stand by Delobelle and Argenton, and even rivals the latter by insisting upon bringing up his son for a calling for which the boy obviously has no aptitude. Other touches there are that remind us of this book and that — for example the quiet household of the Ebsens suggests that of the Delobelles in *Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné* and this novel is further recalled by the description of the banking house of the Authemans, by the brief reference to the housekeeper whose monomania is neatness, and by the slight recrudescence of Daudet's prejudice against the dramatic profession. Suggestions of *Jack* are almost as frequent, but, after all, such suggestions are more curious than important, for while Daudet unquestionably had certain fixed prejudices which he felt called upon to exploit whenever he got a chance, no novelist of our times has had more of that affluence of genius that makes it unnecessary for a writer to repeat himself.

In estimating the extent of this affluence we

shall find ourselves, in conclusion, compelled to take no little account of *L'Évangéliste.* It is probably, as has been indicated, his most tragical book, at least it is one of his strongest, and while some of us may prefer the variety and charm of the *Lettres de mon Moulin* or the irrepressible gaiety of the first two Tartarin books, or the pure comedy of *Numa Roumestan,* we have no right to let our preferences blind us to the fact that the addition of so powerful a book as *L'Évangéliste* to the charming novels just enumerated gives Daudet a fair claim to be considered the most comprehensive genius that the annals of French fiction have been able to display since the untimely death of Balzac. For in endeavoring to determine an author's place in literature we must consider the range as well as the quality of his work. *L'Évangéliste,* opening up as it does a series of important "problem novels" marks a decided widening of the range of Daudet's artistic interests and efforts, while at the same time it perhaps reveals the development of a more or less new quality in his work — that of moral intensity. Thus it is a very important book to the careful student of Daudet, and is also so interesting and powerful in itself that it ought to appeal strongly to the thoughtful general reader.

W. P. TRENT.

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THE EVANGELIST.

I.

GRANDMOTHER.

THEY have returned from the cemetery, at nightfall, to a little house in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce. Grandmother has just been buried; and now, with friends gone, and door closed, alone in the small home which, during the last few hours, has seemed to become larger, and where the slightest object reminds them of the absent one, Mme. Ebsen and her daughter feel most keenly all the horror of their sorrow. Even yonder, at Montparnasse, when the earth opened and swallowed their loved one, they had no such keen sense of their irreparable loss, nor realization of the anguish of eternal separation as comes to them now when they see the vacant chair in the window corner. It is as if Grandmother had just died a second time.

Mme. Ebsen has dropped into a chair, from which she does not stir, weighed down in her heavy mourning gown, and without even the strength to remove her shawl and bonnet, the splendid crêpe veil of which bristles stiffly above the kindly, tear-stained face. Using her handkerchief vigorously,

and mopping her swollen eyes, she begins to enumerate the many virtues of the departed, her kindness, her gayety, her courage, and relates so many episodes from her own and her daughter's life, that a stranger admitted to this simple *vocero*[1] would have been thoroughly acquainted with the history of these three women. He would have learned that M. Ebsen, an engineer from Copenhagen, who had been ruined by his inventions, had come to Paris twenty years before to obtain a patent on an electric clock, that it had never succeeded as they wished, and that the inventor had died, leaving his wife alone in the *hôtel* with her old Mamma, and so poor that she did not know what to do during her approaching confinement.

Ah! without Grandmother, what would have become of them, without Grandmother and her brave little crochet needle, that flew faster and faster day and night, as she made table covers, and pieces of handmade *guipure*, at that time very slightly known in Paris, and which the old Danish woman pluckily offered for sale in the fancy shops. In this way she had been able to keep the house going, and to give the little Éline a good nurse;

[1] *Vocero.* It is the custom in Corsica when a man dies, and especially when he has been assassinated, for some of the women of his family, or, in their absence, for friends to improvise beside the body, in the presence of all the members of the family, and their intimate friends, verses which recall the virtues of the deceased, and, in the event of his assassination, call upon his family to avenge the untimely death. These verses, in the dialect of the country, are recited in a monotone, in simple, impetuous language most exciting to the fierce blood of the audience. Such an improvisation is called a *vocero*. — TRANSLATOR.

but in making those circles, and that delicate lace, she had sacrificed her eyesight. Dear, dear Grandmother! And the *vocero* is unfolded, broken by sobs, by childish words that come back to the good woman in her orphan's grief, and to which the foreign accent, her heavy Copenhagen French, which twenty years in Paris have not been able to correct, impart a certain something ingenuous and touching.

Her daughter's sorrow is less expansive. Very pale, with teeth clenched, Éline busies herself about the house in her quiet way, with movements steady and deliberate. Her full, lithe figure is draped in funereal black, the gloom of which is somewhat relieved by the heavy, blond tresses, and by the bloom of her nineteen summers. Noiselessly, like a skilful manager, she has revived the fire, which was covered and dying out in their long absence, drawn the curtains, lighted the lamp, and rescued the little parlor from the chill and cheerlessness in which they had found it. Then, while the mother still talks and sobs, she relieves her of her bonnet and shawl, puts warm slippers on her feet in place of the boots all soaked and heavy with cemetery mud, and leading her by the hand, as she would have done a little child, seats her at the table, where the flowered tureen stands smoking hot between two dishes brought in from the restaurant. Mme. Ebsen resists. Eat? Ah! well! yes. But she is not hungry. Then at the sight of the little table, and the third place which is vacant:

"No, Lina. Please don't."

"Yes, yes, you must."

Éline has insisted on dining there from the first evening, and on making no change in their habits, realizing that they would be more painful to resume the next day. And how wisely she has acted, this sweet and sensible Lina! Already the combined brightness of the lamp and the fire have brought warmth into the room, and it is penetrating this poor, chilled heart. As always happens after such exhausting crises, Mme. Ebsen eats with ravenous appetite; and, little by little, her thoughts, without changing their object, are modified and lose their bitterness. Certainly, everything possible was done for Grandmother's happiness, and up to her last hour she had lacked no comfort. And then, what a solace it must have been in that dreadful moment to feel that she was surrounded by so much sympathy and love! How many people there were in the modest funeral procession! The street was quite black with them. There were her old pupils, Léonie d'Arlot, the Baroness Gerspach, Paule and Louise de Lostrande, — not one was absent. Besides, they had what not even the rich can obtain to-day, for love or money, an address from Pastor Aussandon the Dean of the Theological Society, — Aussandon, the great orator of the Reformed Church, who for fifteen years had not been heard in Paris. How beautiful was what he had said about the family, and how affected he had been when he spoke of that brave grandmother, who, in her old age, had exiled herself to

follow her children, unwilling to be separated from them for even one day.

"No, not for a single day," sighs Mme. Ebsen, to whom the memory of the pastor's words bring fresh tears. And, taking in her arms her tall daughter, who has approached the mother, and is endeavoring to comfort her, she embraces her fondly, and cries:

"Let us love each other dearly, my Linette, and let us never part."

With arms thrown around the sobbing form, and pressing a lingering caress on the gray hair, Éline answers, but in a low voice, for she is trying to hold back the tears:

"Never! you know it, mother, never!"

The warmth of the room, the hearty meal, the three sleepless nights, and the tears, have exhausted the poor mother, and now she is sleeping. Éline comes and goes quietly, clears the table, and sets in order the house, which had been upset by that frightful, sudden departure. This is her way of benumbing her grief — by engaging in some active work. But when she comes to that window corner, where the curtain was always raised, where the old lady used to sit all day long, Éline's heart fails her. She cannot disturb those little objects which preserve the trace of a habit, and the marks of the trembling fingers that used to handle them, — the scissors, the spectacles, fallen from their case, and marking the page in a volume of Andersen, the crochet-needle sticking in a piece of work already begun, and hanging out

of the open drawer, the lace cap with its violet strings untied and dangling from the window fastening.

Éline stops and meditates.

All her childhood is associated with this corner. It is here that Grandmother taught her to read and sew. While Mme. Ebsen was out giving her German lessons, the little Lina would sit on this stool at the feet of the old Danish woman, who talked to her of her native land, told her legends of the North, and sang to her that sea-song "King Christian," for her husband had been the captain of a vessel.

After a while, when Éline in her turn was able to earn her living, it was still in this corner that she used to establish herself on coming home in the evening and Grandmother continued to talk to the young girl with the same protecting tenderness that the little Lina had enjoyed. And, during these later years, when the mind of the old lady had begun to weaken a little, it happened that she sometimes confused her daughter with her granddaughter, and called Lina "Elisabeth," which was Mme. Ebsen's name, and spoke to her of her deceased husband, thus blending their two personalities, which in her heart were but one and the same affection, a double maternity. It needed but a word to recall her to herself, and then, how she would laugh! Oh! that angelic laugh, that child-like laugh, that rippled from between the bows of the little cap. It is all over now. Éline will never again see it. At this thought, all her

courage breaks down. Her tears, which for her mother's sake she had restrained all day, and also from a feeling of modesty and delicacy, for she was embarrassed by so many expressions of sympathy, — her tears now flow impetuously, and, choked with sobs and cries, she escapes into the next room.

Here the window is open wide. The night comes in, with gusts of damp wind, which toss the March moonlight, scattering its white light on the unmade bed and the two chairs, still standing face to face. It was here that the coffin had rested that morning, during the pastor's address, delivered, according to the Lutheran rite, at the house. There is no disorder in this little chamber of death, none of the surroundings to indicate a long illness, nothing to show the horrors of disease. Grandmother, who scarcely ever entered this room except to sleep, had found here a deeper sleep, a longer night, that is all! She did not like this room. "It is too gloomy," she used to say. And from it one could see only trees, M. Aussandon's garden, beyond, that of the Deaf-Mutes, and the belfry of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, — nothing but verdure against the stones. This is the real charm of Paris, but the Danish woman preferred her little window-corner, from which she could enjoy the movement and life of the street.

Is it these thoughts, or the effect of the profound sky, in places rough and billowy like the sea? Éline no longer weeps. Through the open window her grief seems to ascend into the sky, and she is

soothed. By that path the dear soul must have taken its flight, and her gaze seeks the distant heavens, where fleecy clouds are sailing, and where pale vistas open in the sky.

"Grandmother, are you there? Can you see me?"

And, softly, she continues to call her, speaking in accents of prayer. Then the clock strikes the hour on Saint-Jacques, and on the Val-de-Grâce, the leafless trees shiver in the night wind, there is a whistle from a railway engine, the sound of a tramway horn rises above the continuous roar of Paris. Éline leaves the balcony, by which she has been kneeling in prayer, closes the window, and returns to the room where her mother is still sleeping, her childlike slumber shaken by deep sighs. Before that honest face, with its wrinkles of kindliness, with its tear-swollen eyes, Éline thinks of the self-sacrifice, the devotion, of this excellent woman, of the heavy family burden borne so bravely, so cheerfully, the child to rear, the house to provide for, responsibilities that belong to a man, yet with never a word of anger, never a complaint. The young girl's heart overflows with tenderness and gratitude. She, also, will devote herself to her mother, and once again she promises solemnly "to love her dearly, and never to part from her."

But some one is gently tapping at the door. It is a little girl, seven or eight years old, wearing a school-girl's black apron, her smooth hair tied almost over her forehead with a bright ribbon.

"Is it you, Fanny?" asks Éline, stepping over the threshold for fear of waking Mme. Ebsen: "There will be no lesson this evening."

"Oh! I know that, Mademoiselle." And the child steals a curious glance towards Grandmother's corner, to see how it looks when one is dead. "I know that very well, but Papa wished me to come up just the same, and give you a kiss because of your great sorrow."

"Oh! you are a dear little girl."

She takes the child's head between her two hands, and kisses her with real tenderness.

"Good-bye, Fanny, you must come again to-morrow. Wait while I light the way for you. The stairs are quite dark." And, leaning over the balustrade, and holding the lamp high to guide the little girl to her rooms on the floor below, she sees some one standing waiting in the shadow.

"Is that you, Monsieur Lorie?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle; it is I. Make haste, Fanny." And raising his eyes timidly to this fair, lovely girl, whose hair seems to dissolve into rays of light under the lamp, he explains, in a long, high-sounding phrase, embellished like a mourning bouquet of the first quality, that he had not dared to intrude himself to offer again the tribute, — the tribute of his condolences; then breaking off suddenly from all this solemn commonplace:

"With all my heart, I sympathize with you, Mademoiselle Éline."

"I thank you, Monsieur Lorie."

He takes the child by the hand, Éline returns to her room, and the two doors on the ground-floor and the floor above close at the same instant, as if impelled by a common emotion.

II.

A FUNCTIONARY.

THESE Lories had been living in the house on the Rue du Val-de-Grâce for four or five months. It is a provincial street, where the neighborhood gossip is discussed on the door-steps, where the convent walls, overhung by tall trees, look down on the dogs, the cats, the pigeons, that frolic in the roadway with no fear of passing carriages. In this quiet street the flutter of curiosity caused by the Lories' arrival had not yet subsided.

One morning in October, in a driving rain, — a genuine moving day, — they had made their appearance, Monsieur tall, dressed in deep mourning, with a crêpe band on his hat. Although still a young man, his serious air, and mouth firmly set between administrative whiskers, made him seem much older than he really was. Accompanying him were two children, one a boy, about twelve years old, wearing a sailor's cap decorated with anchor and gilt cord; the other a little girl who clung to the hand of her nurse. The maid, in a Berrichon cap, was also in mourning, and as sunburnt as the others. A railroad dray followed closely after, piled high with chests, trunks, and bundles.

"And the furniture?" asked the *concierge*, as he conducted the new tenants to their rooms.

"There is none," replied La Berrichonne calmly, and as the quarter's rent was paid in advance, he had to be satisfied with this information. Where did they sleep? What did they eat on? And how did they manage for chairs? Questions difficult to answer, for the door was seldom opened, and, even though the windows were bare of curtains, the shutters were always closed on the street and garden. It was not from Monsieur, with his severe manner, his long frock-coat buttoned to the chin, that one could expect any information. Besides, he was never there, for he went away early in the morning, with a preoccupied air, carrying under his arm a leather portfolio, and did not return until night.

As for the tall, buxom girl in a nurse's costume, who served them, she had a certain way of switching her skirt aside, and a sudden fashion of turning her back on indiscreet questions that kept people at a distance. When she went out the boy usually walked before, and the little girl clung to her skirt, or, when she left the house alone, to go to the laundry, a bundle of linen on her robust hip, she locked the children in by a double bolt. These people received no visits, except that two or three times a week there came a little man, who wore a black straw hat, a kind of bargeman, or longshoreman, with sharp eyes set deep in a saffron complexion, and always with a big basket in his hand. In short, nothing was known of

them, except that Monsieur was named Lorie-Dufresne, a fact attested by a visiting-card tacked on the door:

CHARLES LORIE-DUFRESNE,
~~Sub-Prefect at Cherchell,~~
~~Province of Algiers.~~

The lower lines were crossed out by a stroke of the pen, but incompletely, as if done reluctantly.

He had, in reality, just been recalled, and under the following circumstances. Appointed to his position in Algeria toward the close of the Empire, it was owing to the long distance from France that Lorie-Dufresne had been retained under the new *régime*. Lacking, moreover, very firm convictions, the case with the greater number of our officials, he was quite disposed to give the Republic the same proofs of zeal that he had bestowed on the Empire, provided that he should be maintained at his post. To live at little expense in a delightful climate, with a palace for the residence of the Sub-Prefect, with its orange and banana groves laid out in terraces down to the sea, at his command a throng of *chaouchs* and *spahis* who flew to obey his slightest gesture, their long, red cloaks spreading open as they ran, and brilliant as flamingoes' wings, saddle and carriage horses furnished by the government, on account of the long distances to be travelled, — we can readily understand that such considerations were well worth some sacrifice of opinion.

Having survived the Sixteenth of May, Lorie

saw his position threatened only after the departure of MacMahon, but even then he escaped, thanks to the new Prefect, Monsieur Chemineau. This Chemineau, formerly a lawyer of Bourges, a man crafty, cold, and obsequious, ten years the senior of Lorie, had been to the latter, at that time Counsellor of Prefecture, that ideal type which young people adopt in beginning life, and on which, almost unconsciously, they model themselves, at the age when they must imitate something or somebody. His handsome face assumed the old mien of his ideal, he imitated his astute, affectedly grave manners, his wary smile, the cut of his whiskers, and even dangled his eye-glasses on the end of his finger as Chemineau did. Years afterwards, when they met once more in Algeria, Chemineau thought he saw again the image of his youth, but in Lorie's expression there was something artless and frank that the Prefect had always lacked. It was to this flattering resemblance, doubtless, that Lorie owed the protection of the old bachelor, who was as dry, snappish, and inexorable as the stamped paper on which he used to write his legal proceedings.

After a few years' residence in Cherchell, Mme. Lorie, unfortunately, fell ill — one of those cruel, feminine ailments that strike at the very sources of life, and which develop rapidly in that exuberant climate, where everything grows quickly. Under penalty of dying in a few months, it was absolutely necessary to return to France, where the moist climate might prolong for many

years, possibly even save, that life so precious to her family. Lorie wished to ask for an exchange, but the Prefect restrained him from doing so. The Minister had forgotten him; to write was to extend his neck to the hangman.

"Be patient for a while. When I cross the sea, I will take you with me."

The poor woman departed alone, and found shelter at Amboise in Touraine, with some distant cousins. She could not even take her children with her, for the old Gailletons, never having had any children themselves, detested them, dreading their presence in the proper, neat house as much as if they had been a shower of locusts or some other pest. So she had to resign herself to the separation. The opportunity to live in such a marvellous climate, with the semblance of a family about her, and where the cost of living was much less than it would have been in a hotel, was too good to be thrown away. Besides, it would not be for long. Chemineau was not the man to rust away in Algeria. "And I will cross the sea with him," said Lorie-Dufresne, using the words of his chief.

Months passed thus, and the invalid was consumed with despair without husband and children, exposed to the idiotic teasing of her cousins, and the dull, racking torture of her malady. Every week there were heartrending letters, with the same wail of "My husband, my children," which made the poor Sub-Prefect tremble to the tips of his whiskers as he watched every Thursday,

through a marine glass at the Club, for the little steamer that came over from France. At a last appeal, more disconsolate than the others, he took a sudden resolve, and embarked for France, determined to see the Minister in person, a step which seemed, in this case, less dangerous than a letter. One can, at least, speak and defend himself. Besides, it is always easier to sign a death-warrant at a distance than to pronounce it in the presence of the condemned. Lorie had reasoned correctly. It happened that this Minister was an excellent man, whose heart was not yet frozen by politics, and who was touched by this bit of family history that had strayed in among his heaps of ambitious papers.

"Return to Cherchell, my dear Monsieur Lorie. At the first change your case shall be attended to."

You may imagine whether the Sub-Prefect was happy when he rushed through the gate of the Place Beauvau, and jumped into a cab to be driven to the station where he took the Touraine express. His arrival at the Gailletons was less gay. His wife received him lying on her couch, from which she never moved now. She passed the long, sad days looking out of the window at the great tower of the Château d'Amboise whose massive, black, circular form loomed up before the captive's mournful gaze. For some time she had not stayed in the Gailletons' house, but lodged near by, at the cottage of the farmer who took care of the vineyard that adjoined the garden.

As the malady progressed, Mme. Gailleton was

afraid that the wear and tear of the sick-room, the sticky medicines, the oil from the night-lamp, would injure her polished floors and immaculate furniture. From daybreak until night the old woman was never seen without her feather duster, her scrubbing brush, her bit of wax. She passed her life polishing floors, always out of breath, unkempt, dressed in a hideous green skirt, down on all fours. To keep her beloved house in order — this was her one idea. It was entirely white, this house, and over-nice, with the red cockade of a geranium showing at every window — a true type of the Touraine home of the smaller kind.

The husband was almost as mad about his garden as Madame about her house, and as he took the Sub-Prefect to see his invalid wife, he made him admire the military precision of his borders, with all the flowers as shining as if Madame had dusted them off with her brush.

"And you can see very well, cousin, that it would not do at all to have children here. But here we are at our cousin's house. You are going to find her changed."

Ah! yes, changed, and very pale, with cheeks as hollow as if a knife had carved them out, and the poor, suffering body looking emaciated and deformed under the long, flowing robe. But Lorie did not notice all that at once, for the joy of seeing her dear husband had brought the roses to her cheeks, and she seemed as young and full of life as if she were twenty. What an embrace, when they were alone, and Gailleton had returned to his

gardening. At last she had him there, she could hold him in her arms, she should not have to die without a kiss from one of her dear ones. And the children, Maurice and Fanny? Had Sylvanire taken good care of them? How they must have grown! How cruel not to be able to have, at least, her little Fanny with her!

Then, nestling close to him, and in a whisper, for she heard Gailleton's rake scratching under the window:

"Oh! take me away, take me away. If you only knew how tired I am here, all alone, how that enormous tower seems to suffocate me! I feel as if it were that that keeps me from seeing you." And the meddling selfishness of those old cranks, their terror when the money for her board arrived a day late, the sugar, the bread, they accounted against her, how the coarse hands of the farmer's wife hurt her when she was carried to bed — she told him all, unbosoming all the bitterness of her sufferings during the long months she had been away from him. Lorie talked to her soothingly, reasoned with her in his serious way, but in reality he was deeply moved, and almost heart-broken. He repeated over and over again the reassuring words of the minister. At the first change — God knows, of late changes have not been infrequent — in a month, in a week, perhaps to-morrow, his appointment will be in *l'Officiel.*

Then what beautiful plans they made together, a mirage of happiness and health, promotion and fortune, such as this chimerical government

employé knew well how to imagine, for he had adopted from Chemineau only his closely shaven lip, and his air of importance. She listened to him, pacified, with her head supported on his breast, trying to believe, in spite of the dull attacks of pain tormenting her.

The next day, one of those bright, airy mornings common on the banks of the Loire, they were at breakfast, the window open, the invalid still in bed, with the photographs of the children before her, when the wooden stairs creaked under the hob-nailed shoes of Cousin Gailleton. He came in, holding in his hand *l'Officiel*, which he had taken ever since the time when he had held the office of Registrar of the Court of Commerce, and which he read conscientiously from the first to the last page.

"Eh well! the change has taken place, and you are recalled."

He said it brutally, having already lost his deference of the last evening for the high employé of the State. Lorie snatched the paper from him, but dropped it immediately to run to his wife, whose face had become ghastly with agony:

"But no, no. They are mistaken. It is certainly an error."

The express would soon pass. In four hours he would see the Minister and all would be explained. But to see the shocking change that had come over her, death written upon her face, terrified him, and he wished to wait until the doctor came.

"No — go at once —" she whispered, and, to

make him decide, she declared that she felt better, and, when he left, embraced him vigorously, with arms whose strength somewhat reassured him.

On this day Lorie-Dufresne reached the Place Beauvau too late. On the next his Excellency was not receiving. After waiting two hours, he was admitted the third day, and found himself in the presence, not of the Minister, but of Chemineau, installed, wearing an office coat, and entirely at home.

"Why, yes, my good fellow, it is I. Been here since morning. You could be here also if you had listened to me. But no. You preferred to come and have your head chopped off. That will teach you . . ."

"But I thought . . . I was promised. . . ."

"The Minister was forced to do it. You were the last Sub-Prefect of the Sixteenth of May. . . . You come here, and say, There I am. . . . Then, you see . . . !"

They were standing face to face, their whiskers cut exactly alike and of the same length, their two eye-glasses dangling from the same finger, but with the distance between them that exists between a copy and a master picture. He thought of his wife, his children. This position was his only resource.

"What must I do?" he asked in a broken voice, half choked. Chemineau, almost moved to pity, advised him to see the Minister from time to time. He had been appointed Director of the Press, and he himself might be able to find a place for him in his office.

In despair, Lorie returned to the hotel. There a telegram, sent from Amboise, awaited him: "Come quickly. She is dying." But it was in vain that he hastened to her bedside. There was one who went before him who reached her first. When he arrived his wife was dead. She had died alone with the two Gailletons, far from all she loved, with anguish in her heart for the future of her poor dear ones. Oh, heartless politics!

Chemineau's promise held him in Paris. Besides, what was there to take him to Africa? The nurse would bring the children to him. She would also attend to the settlement of a few trifling debts, and pack his personal papers, books, and clothing, since all the rest, — furniture, linen, plate, belonged to the Government. Sylvanire was worthy of this confidence. She had been for twelve years in the service of the family, ever since the time when Lorie, married not long before at Bourges, was as yet only Counsellor of Prefecture, and had engaged her as nurse for his first-born. She had recently suffered the sad experience so common with country girls. Betrayed by a student of the Artillery School, she had been left in the lurch with an infant, which soon died. For once this simple, humane charity had its reward. The Lories found in their servant the absolute devotion of a robust, handsome girl, henceforth safe from temptation, and out of conceit with love. — Ah! ye—ye—es, love? What was it? she asked. A stretcher and a hospital. It amounted to that. She was also proud to serve a master in the service

of the government, a master who wore an embroidered coat and an opera hat. In the comfortable, thoroughgoing way in which she did everything, Sylvanire straightened out their complicated affairs preparatory to the removal, a much more difficult liquidation than Lorie imagined, for all her savings went with it. When she left the car, and emerged from the crowd, holding by the hand the two orphan children in their new mourning, there was a moment of deep emotion — one of those intense little dramas that are constantly happening at the railway stations, amid the din of moving trucks, the hustling of baggage, the confusion of the custom-house. One wishes to conduct himself correctly before people, especially when he wears a beautiful pair of whiskers *à la Chemineau;* he pretends to occupy himself with ordinary details, but the tears come all the same, and moisten his most commonplace words.

"And the baggage?" asked Lorie, sobbing. And Sylvanire, still more affected, replied that there was too much, and that Romain would send it by fr—freight tr—tr—ain.

"Oh! then, if—if Romain . . ." He wanted to say that if Romain attended to it, it would certainly be all right. But the tears prevented him. The children did not weep; they were too bewildered by the long journey, and besides, they were not old enough to realize their loss, and the sadness of no longer being able to say, "Mamma" to her who pardons everything.

How dismal did Paris seem to these poor little

Algerians, coming from the azure sky, the bright sunshine, and their free life over the sea, to a third-floor room in a hotel on the Rue du Mail, with its dingy walls and shabby furniture! And then, the dinners at the *table d'hôte*, where they must not talk, — every face about them strange, — and for amusement a short walk under an umbrella with the nurse, who did not dare to venture beyond the Place des Victoires, for fear of losing her way. The father, during this time, while waiting to re-enter the government, was running about in search of employment.

What employment?

When one has passed twenty years in the service of the administration, he is no longer capable of any other occupation. He is wearied, worn out, by the emptiness and pretentiousness of official life. No one knew better than he how to turn out an administrative letter, in that rounded, colorless style, which has a horror of using the proper word, and aims at but one thing, — to speak without saying anything. No one knew more thoroughly than he the formulary of hierarchical salutations, how a chief-justice should be addressed, how to write to a bishop, a general of the army, a "dear old comrade"; how to exalt the banner of the administration in the face of the magistracy, its irreconcilable enemy. As for his passion for the office, for old papers, for memorandum slips, for green boxes, for blank-books, for afternoon calls on the President's wife, on the General's wife, when he would stand chatting — his back to the fireplace, and

holding aside his coat-tails — saying all sorts of ambiguous, uncompromising nothings, appearing to agree heartily with everybody, praising warmly, contradicting softly, waving his eye-glasses in the air, with an "Ah! permit me . . . "; as to presiding, to the sound of music and drums, at a meeting of the Board of Examiners, at an agricultural society, at a distribution of prizes, reciting a verse from Horace, a jest from Montaigne, and modulating his tone according as he addressed children, recruits, priests, workmen, Sisters of Charity, country-folk — in short, for all the stereotypes, poses, and shams of the administrative make-up, Lorie-Dufresne had no equal but Chemineau. But to what use could he put all this now? Was it not a terrible thing, when a man was forty years old, to have nothing on which to feed and clothe his children but a lot of platform gestures and empty speeches?

While waiting for his position in the Department, the ex-Sub-Prefect was reduced to seek work in an agency for dramatic copying.

He found a dozen men seated around a large table, in an *entresol* on the Rue Montmartre, so dark that the gas burned all day. They wrote without speaking a word, strangers all to one another, as ill-assorted a lot as the patients in a hospital, or the inmates of a night-lodging, but ruined, every one of them — starvelings, with feverish eyes, out-at-elbows, savoring of poverty or worse. Occasionally among them appeared an old soldier, neatly dressed, well-fed, wearing a yellow ribbon

in his buttonhole, who came to earn in a few afternoon hours the money to supplement his little pension.

And in the same uniform hand, on paper of the same quality, very smooth, so that the pen could glide over it the more readily, they worked unremittingly, copying dramas, vaudevilles, operettas, pantomimes, comedies, writing mechanically, with head lowered, and eyes vacant, as the ox labors. Lorie, especially at first, was interested in his work, and amused at the thousand whimsical plots stringing out from the point of his pen, the comicalities of the vaudeville, with its constant surprises, the catastrophes of the modern drama, with its perennial dissoluteness, accommodated to every taste.

"Where do they go to find all these things?" he sometimes asked himself, amazed at the number of extraordinary complications possible outside of the common realities of life. What struck him also was the number of excellent meals eaten in the plays. There was always champagne, lobster, venison pie, people always talking with their mouths crammed, napkins tucked under their chins; while here was he, transcribing these details, breakfasting on a two-cent roll, which he crumbled off slyly in the bottom of his pocket. From which he concluded that the theatre and real life are entirely different things.

At his occupation of copyist, Lorie earned three or four francs a day, an amount he might have doubled by working in the evening at home, but they would not trust the manuscripts to be taken

away; consequently, there were many hours of idleness. And Chemineau was putting him off from day to day, and the hotel bill was increasing at a fearful rate, and the baggage would soon be there with freight charges of three hundred francs! Three hundred francs worth of baggage! He could not believe it; but when he saw under a shed at Bercy that line of chests and packages, all addressed to him, this unreasonable figure was explained.

Finding it impossible to make a selection, Sylvanire had brought away everything, cast-off clothes, old papers, — all those things in the way of useless *impedimenta* which the rovers of the government get rid of at every move, — everything that had accumulated at the Sub-Prefect's during his six years' residence, old broken sets of law-books, pamphlets on the alfa, the eucalyptus, the phylloxera, all of Madame's gowns — poor Madame, — old embroidered military caps, the ivory hilts of parade swords. There was enough to open a bric-à-brac shop with the sign *The Dislodged Sub-Prefect* — the whole stoutly tied up, nailed, sealed by Romain, secure from accidents by land or sea.

How was he to move all that to the hotel? Finding it out of the question to do so, he was obliged to look for lodgings, and ferreted out the little *rez-de-chaussée* in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, which tempted the Sub-Prefect, because of its quietude, the provincial appearance of the house and street, and the vicinity of the Luxembourg, where the children could get a breath of air. The removal took place gayly. The little ones were

overjoyed to find, when the boxes were opened, their well-known treasures, their books, Fanny's doll, Maurice's carpenter outfit. After the dulness and indifference of the hotel, how jolly was this gypsy camp of a place, with so many useless articles instead of so many useful ones that were lacking, the candle stuck in an old cologne bottle, and newspapers serving as plates. They laughed heartily the first evening; and when, after a light dinner — in reality, nothing but a snack — the mattresses were unrolled, the boxes piled together in a heap, Lorie, before going to sleep, walked solemnly around this interior, looking like a merchandise shop, and surveyed it by the light of a single candle, he uttered a word which expressed the secret contentment of them all:

"To be sure, it is a little bare, but, anyhow, we are at home!"

The next day was less cheerful. With the payment of freight charges, and the rent, in advance, Lorie was nearly at the end of his money, already greatly cut into by the Gailletons' bill, their travelling expenses, his expenditures in Paris, and the purchase of a small plot in the cemetery at Amboise. Oh! quite a small one, for some one who had never occupied much room in the world. Winter was approaching, however, a winter entirely unlike those in Algeria, and for which the children were unprepared, having neither proper clothing nor shoes. Fortunately, there was Sylvanire. The good girl did all the work, went to the laundry, cut out and made clothes from the left-overs

of former times, cleaned Monsieur's gloves, mended his eye-glasses with a bit of brass wire, for the former official was not neglectful of his appearance. It was she also who bargained with the old clothes merchants in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, with the secondhand book dealers of the Rue de la Sorbonne, selling old law-books and pamphlets on vine-growing, and, relics still more precious, the dress parade uniform of the Sub-Prefect, and his frock-coats, embroidered in silver thread.

One of these administrative cast-offs which the merchant had refused to buy on account of its decrepitude, served Lorie as a dressing-gown, thus saving his only street costume; and it was a sight to see him, shivering and dignified under his embroidered rags, striding up and down the rooms to keep warm, while Sylvanire wore out her eyes by the light of a candle, and the children slept in packing boxes transformed into beds, that they might be protected from the chill on the cold floors. No, never in any of the pieces that he was copying, no matter how strange, how extraordinary, they were, had Lorie-Dufresne found anything so preposterous.

"The children slept in packing boxes transformed into beds."

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III.

ÉLINE EBSEN.

AT the home of the Ebsens, Grandmother, from her window-corner, used to watch the movements of the people below. Her hands trembled so that she dropped the stitches of her work, and the volume of Andersen shook in the unsteady fingers, so that the good old lady had scarcely any distraction but that afforded by the street; and, as no great number of people passed that way — from time to time the white epaulets of a nurse at the Val-de-Grâce, the embroidered collar of a student, two Sisters of Charity in their winged caps, all as regular and automatic as the personages of *Jacquemart* — the arrival of the Lories had furnished a little variety in the daily routine.

She knew the father's office hour, the purchases of the maid, the days on which the man with the basket was to be expected. The little girl interested her especially, snuggling close to her guardian, as if she were sensitive to the cold, or hopping about among the puddles of water, her slender legs half-covered. Grandmother suspected that nurse of being very wicked; and knowing to the smallest detail the little girl's toilet, the two

mourning frocks with their hems let down, her boots down at the heels, she was indignant, and fretted for hours, all by herself.

"Was such a thing ever seen before? Why, they will make the little darling lame . . . as if it were not an easy matter to repair her heels."

She watched to see whether the child had her coat on, she was anxious if she was out in the rain, and her mind was not relieved until, at the corner of the street and the Boulevard Saint-Michel she could spy, between two flocks of pigeons, the Berrichonne planted on the edge of the sidewalk, holding the boy by one hand, the little girl by the other, waiting, with provincial terror of carriages, for an opportunity to cross.

"Come now . . . cross now . . . ." murmured Grandmother, as if they could hear her, beckoning to them from behind her window. Mme. Ebsen, more romantic and sentimental, was especially impressed by Monsieur's beautiful manners, and by the wide crêpe band on his hat — a widower's mourning, most surely, since they never saw the mother. And the two women had long discussions on the subject of their neighbors.

Éline, occupied all day with her lessons, was less concerned in the existence of the Lories, but these little motherless children, lost and alone in Paris, touched her heart, and every time she met them she smiled on them, and tried to make their acquaintance, regardless of the rebuffs of the Berrichon cap. On Christmas Eve, the evening of the *Juleaften* of the Danes, which the Ebsen ladies

never failed to celebrate, Éline went down to invite the children to come up and join the other little ones of their age in eating *risengroed* and all the sweetmeats that hung on the branches of the Christmas tree, among the lighted candles and diminutive lanterns.

Imagine the grief of the poor little dears hidden behind Sylvanire, who stood across the threshold — imagine the bitter disappointment when she said that the children never went out, that Monsieur had expressly forbidden it; and then to hear all the evening above their heads the songs, the music of the piano, the joyous cries, and the patter of little feet shaking the floor as they danced around a beautiful Christmas tree. For once, M. Lorie found that Sylvanire had exceeded her authority, — and the next day, which was a holiday, he had the children dressed, and went up with them to call on the ladies.

They were all three at home; and the ceremonious entrance of the former Sub-Prefect, the low courtesies of the little man and his sister, immediately made a deep impression on these simple-hearted persons. Fanny's affability soon made up for the formality of their arrival. She was so glad to be near the young lady who smiled sweetly at her when they met, and to see the old lady who watched them from her window when they returned from their walks. Éline took the child on her lap, and cramming her little pockets with sweets left over from the evening before, encouraged her to talk.

"Seven years old already! What a big girl! Then you must go to school?"

"Oh! no, Mademoiselle, not yet," replied the father quickly, as if he was afraid of some *naïveté* on the part of the child. She was very delicate, and must not be pushed. The boy, on the contrary, had the health of an athlete, exactly the temperament for his profession.

"You are going to make of him then . . .?" asked Mme. Ebsen.

"A sailor," responded the father, without hesitating. "When he is sixteen he will enter Navale. . . ." And turning toward the little boy, who had sunk down on his chair, he brought him up straight in his seat with an effective gesture. "Eh? Maurice, the *Borda!*"

At the name of the training-ship the eyes of little Fanny flashed with pride: as for the future aspirant, who twisted the insignia of his cap and bent toward the ground one of those terrible childish noses that seem to say to the rest of the body: "Hurry up there. I am getting ahead of you," he trembled at the name of the *Borda*, uttered an ecstatic "Ah!" then relapsed into silence, as if stunned.

"The air of Paris does not seem to agree with him," said M. Lorie, as if to excuse that apathetic attitude, and went on to say that they were in Paris only temporarily, to attend to some business matters; that they were only half-settled. Well! they lacked a number of little comforts. All this told in a matter-of-course way,

holding his hat at his side, his eyeglasses hanging on the end of his fingers. He spoke in well-rounded sentences, shrugging his shoulders, a sly, knowing smile lighting up the solemnity of the regular, haughty face. Mme. Ebsen and her mother were dazzled.

Éline, although she thought M. Lorie a little wordy, was nevertheless moved by the touching and simple manner in which he alluded to the death of his wife, speaking in a low tone, rapidly, and in a hoarse voice that did not seem to belong to the same man. She perceived, also, from certain details in the little girl's toilet — although she was doubtless dressed in her best — from the patching on the embroidered collar, the dyed ribbon on her hat, that in spite of the father's fine speeches, they could not be very well off; and her sympathy was increased by that poverty, surmised, but which she could never have believed so complete, so abject.

Several days after this visit, Sylvanire, entirely distracted, rang the Ebsens' bell. Fanny was ill, very ill. She had been taken suddenly, and, in her master's absence, the nurse in her anxiety had applied to the only persons whom she knew. Éline and her mother went down at once, and both were overwhelmed by the dismal bareness of the three rooms, without fire, curtains, or furniture. Piles of ragged books, and green boxes, stuffed and overcrowded with old papers, were heaped in every corner. Scattered about the rooms were a few kitchen utensils, two or three mattresses rolled up,

and a number of packing boxes of all sizes, packed with all sorts of old things, and with linen, or else entirely empty, and serving as furniture. One, turned upside down was used as a table, the word "glass" stencilled on the four corners among the plates, a crust of bread, and a bit of cheese left over from their recent breakfast. Another was used as a bed for the little girl, who was shivering between the boards, as pale and pinched as if she were lying in her coffin, while beside her sobbed the pupil of the *Borda* in his gorgeous cap.

The arrangement of the apartment was the same as that of the floor above, but the contrast between their tidy, comfortable little *salon*, and their well-warmed bedchambers with this place, only fit for a dog kennel, wounded Éline's heart with remorse. It is really possible, then, to live beside such distress without suspecting it. At the same time she recalled the elegant manners of the official, the free and easy tone in which he admitted — as he played with his eye-glasses — that they lacked a number of little comforts. Yes, many little comforts, indeed! For example, fire, wine, warm clothing, bed-covering, shoes — and children have been known to die for lack of these same little nothings-at-all.

"Go for a doctor, quickly!"

Now it happened that Aussandon's son, an army physician, was spending a few days' furlough with his parents. Mme. Ebsen ran to find him, while Éline, aided by Sylvanire, busied herself in transforming the wretched room. The nurse, who had

lost her head completely, bumped against everything in the way with an iron bedstead brought down hastily from the upper floor, and scattered all over the stairs the faggots with which Grandmother filled her apron, repeating all the while:

"What will Monsieur say? What will Monsieur say?"

"Well?" asked Éline, who had waited in the adjoining room to hear the result of the doctor's visit, not showing herself in the sick-chamber until the lace-trimmed cap of young Aussandon had disappeared in the haze of the little garden. Good Mme. Ebsen was beaming:

"Nothing at all. Just a bilious attack. A few days' rest and care, and she will be all right again. See . . . she seems better already, since she is in a comfortable bed. Then, leaning towards her daughter, she whispered:

"He inquired about you *si chendiment*, I believe he is still hopeful."

"Poor fellow!" said Éline, tucking the patient into the narrow white couch where she, herself, had slept as a little girl; and while the eyes of the child, shining with fever, smiled on her, she felt something warm and moist, like a big dog's caress, on her hand. It was Sylvanire, weeping with joy, and thanking her with her lips, without speaking. Decidedly this girl was not so bad as Grandmother thought. In the evening, when M. Lorie returned, Fanny was sleeping quietly, fresh, pure sheets, drawn up over her slumbers. A cheerful fire burned in the chimney-place. There were

dainty curtains at the windows. A table stood in the room, and by it an arm-chair. The white light of a night-lamp was reflected on the ceiling; everywhere in the child's room, but there only, it seemed as if there had passed an angel of maternity, charming and vigilant.

From that day an intimacy was established between the two families. The ladies adopted Fanny, calling her upstairs at all times, and never allowing her to leave without some gift, a pair of warm mittens for the little hands, so sensitive to the cold, some socks, a nice woollen neckerchief. After Éline returned from teaching in the city, she took the child for an hour every evening and gave her a little instruction. Left for so long to the sole companionship of a servant, Fanny's mind had become stored with Mother Goose tales. The dear little creature's manners were those of a country gossip, and her accent and appearance marred by a provincialism noticeable in children who have remained too long in the nursery. Leaving to her mother the care of Fanny's bodily wants, Éline sought, especially, to wean her from the nurse's apron-strings, and to restore her to her true position of little gentlewoman, without, however, wounding the feelings of the affectionate, but untamed Sylvanire.

And in what could this Lina, by the magic of her grace and sweetness, not have succeeded? She had but to say a word to the Baroness Gerspach, where Chemineau was a visitor, and immediately there was a vacant place for Lorie, in the hitherto inac-

cessible office of the Director. Two hundred francs a month, minus deductions. One might still hope for better things, but it was, at any rate, a beginning — this return to official life, the exile from which was killing him. Oh! the joy of again handling those papers, of opening and closing the green boxes, with their heavy, mouldy odor, of feeling himself to be one of the wheels of that *machine de Marly*, imposing and complicated, cumbersome and decrepit, known as the French Administration. Lorie-Dufresne was entirely rejuvenated.

And how restful, after the day's work was done, to go with Fanny in the evening up to the Ebsens', into that unpretentious *salon* where the heavy, old-fashioned furniture, the Empire table brought from Copenhagen, the electric clock that never ticked — cause of all their misfortunes — contrasted with a pretty chair made by a celebrated upholsterer, and a *jardinière* of cloisonné, gifts of rich pupils. Everywhere were in evidence the old lady's laces, as table scarfs, as hangings on the back of the arm-chair, imparting an old-time whiteness and calm to the room for eyes already charmed by these three ages of woman, so prettily represented by grandmother, mother, and daughter.

When Éline had installed little Fanny at her books, Lorie chatted with Mme. Ebsen, entertaining her with episodes of his days in power, of his bygone successes, such as all fallen majesties like to recall. He enjoyed telling over and over again of the great achievements of his Adminis-

tration, the services he had rendered the colonies by his talent for organization; and, suddenly recalling certain passages from his inauguration addresses, he would extend his arm toward an imaginary audience, and burst out:

"Plenty of room, and everything to accomplish! — the motto of all new countries, gentlemen . . ."

Over there in the corner, where Grandmother dozed behind her spectacles, the lamp-light fell on a more quiet group — Fanny, bent over her book, and Éline, like a gentle protector, sustaining with her arm the little girl. Outside, not twenty steps from the provincial street, growled and roared the tumult of the Boulevard Saint-Michel, the tramping of students on their way to Bullier's. On the evenings of the students' balls there, the racket could be distinctly heard at the Ebsens'. That was, indeed, but one of the double currents of this complex Paris, so confused, so difficult to grasp.

On Sunday evenings, the *salon* presented an animated appearance, and the piano candles were lighted to receive a few friends. In the first place, by way of foundation, there were two Danish families whom the ladies had known since their arrival in Paris, their heavy, cheerful, and silent faces arranged around the wall like tapestries, or, rather, like wall-flowers. Then there was M. Birk, a young clergyman from Copenhagen, recently sent to Paris to officiate at the Danish church in the Rue Chauchat. Éline, who from the time of the former pastor, M. Larsen, had played the organ in

church on Sunday, had continued this gratuitous service for the newcomer; and the latter considered himself obliged, in return, to make a few formal calls at her home. At the same time, there existed no real sympathy between them. The big fellow, with fawn-colored beard, a commonplace, regular-shaped head, and face pitted by small-pox, looked like a worm-eaten figure of a rustic Christ. While affecting the greatest austerity of manner and speech, he was, in reality, a vulgar business man, who knew that in Paris clergymen often found wealthy wives, and had taken it into his head to make use of his stay in this Babylon to pick up a big dowry.

Mme. Ebsen's *salon* was of no service to him in this direction, composed as it was of simple folk with no fortunes; therefore, his forked beard was never seen there long at a time. Birk gave it to be understood that the atmosphere there was not orthodox enough to suit his taste. It is true that the ladies were very tolerant, and concerned themselves little enough about the religious opinions of their guests, but that had not prevented M. Larsen from meeting with Pastor Aussandon in their house for years.

The illustrious Dean, in order to visit his neighbors, had but to cross the little garden that separated them from his summer-house. One could often see him there, pruning-knife in hand, bending his tall body over his rosebushes, while from a window, the impetuous little Mme. Aussandon, cap awry, ready for battle, watched over her

splendid old man, and called him in at the first breath of wind.

"Aussandon, you must come in the house."

"Yes, Bonne."

And he obeyed, more docile than a child.

Thanks to their proximity, and to the translations which the Pastor frequently needed for his lectures on Church History, the two families had become intimate; and some little time before the arrival of the Lories in the house, the youngest of the Aussandon sons, — the one whom the Mamma always called "Major," had asked for Éline Ebsen in marriage.

Unfortunately, the life of an army doctor is spent in garrison, always on the move, so that Éline, in order not to leave her mother and grandmother, promptly said "No," without letting anyone suspect what this "No" had cost her. Since then the relations between the two families had not been the same. Mme. Aussandon avoided the Ebsens. They spoke when they met, but they no longer visited, and their Sunday evenings had lost a little of their animation; for the old Dean was very lively, and "Bonne" had a terrible trumpet voice, which shook the whole room, especially when Henriette Briss was also there, and they discussed theology.

This Henriette Briss was an old maid, from thirty to thirty-five, a Norwegian, and devout Roman Catholic, who, after living twelve years in a convent in Christiania, had been obliged to leave on account of ill-health. Since that time, she had

tried to return to what she called a worldly life. Accustomed to live by rule, and to a mute dependence, having lost all sense of the initiative or of responsibility, Henriette was constantly at odds with men and things. She was easily frightened and embarrassed, always uttering little cries of complaint or appeal, like a bird fallen from its nest. She was, however, intelligent and well-educated, speaking several languages, which had been the means of procuring her the position of governess among rich families in Russia and Poland. She remained nowhere long, however, but was continually wounded and shocked by the realities of life, from which the white enveloping veil of her Order of the Virgin no longer protected her.

"Let us be practical!" the poor girl used to repeat constantly, to strengthen and guide herself. Practical! No one was less so than this unsettled creature, with features drawn by dyspepia, her ill-combed hair pushed back beneath a round travelling hat, dressed in her own economical purchases, or in the rich, but shabby cast-off clothes of her employers, wearing furs in summer over her light-colored gowns. While in her observances she was truly Catholic, at the same time she was a Liberal, and even a Revolutionist, mingling in one enthusiastic adoration Garibaldi and Père Didon. She gave vent to the most absurd ideas and contradictions and in a very little while, of course, frightened the parents of her pupils, who dismissed her. She always hastened back to Paris to spend the pittance she had saved — to Paris, the only place in the

world, she said, where she could be comfortable, and where the air was stimulating and fit to breathe.

When she was supposed to be in Moscow or Copenhagen, Henriette would suddenly appear, delighted to be free. Renting a small furnished room, she followed up the great preachers, visited the sisters in their convents, the priests in their sacristies. She never failed to attend a lecture by one of the theological professors, where she took notes, which she afterwards wrote out. Her dream was to become a Catholic journalist, and she wrote regularly to Louis Veuillot, who never, however, took any notice of her letters. Failing in this ambitious scheme, wherever she went, and especially in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, because of the Lutheran element she met there, Henriette Briss poured out in words her argumentative, controversial spirit, proving her point with quotations, and always leaving exhausted, with parched lips and a violent headache, but overjoyed to have confessed her faith. Finally, when her money was all gone — which always astonished her — she would take another position, anything that offered, and would depart in despair, and for months was not heard of again.

When Lorie met her at Mme. Ebsen's, Henriette was, for the moment, deeply discouraged, and, having too long delayed her application, responses were slow in coming, and she had been obliged to seek lodging in a convent in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, a sort of registry office for working girls. Here her democratic ideas and love

of the People suffered a rude shock from contact with the hypocritical and vicious inmates. Crossing themselves in the chapel, and when they entered the parlor, ornamented with fantastic pictures of the Passion, these dissemblers did not hesitate to break open the trunks in the bedrooms. In the work-rooms they sang refrains from vulgar street songs, and when they went to speak with a possible employer, they hid under a cap their frowsy hair, bedizened with steel pins or tinsel ornaments. Every Sunday, at the Ebsens', whose house was too small to take her in, Henriette bewailed her lot and told of her trials in this low and coarse atmosphere; but her friends, while exceedingly fond of her, had given up offering pecuniary assistance, for the money that they had formerly given her to pay her room-rent or board, always went for some silly fancy, or was devoted to a sentimental or stupid charity. Henriette was aware of their distrust, and bemoaned the fact that she was not more practical, "like Monsieur Lorie, for instance, or you, dear Lina."

"I do not know whether I am practical," said Lina, smiling, "but I manage to want the same thing for a long time, and to do cheerfully what I ought to do."

"Oh well! I ought to bring up children, and I bring them up; but I shall never do it cheerfully. In the first place, I detest children. One is obliged to stoop to speak to them, to make oneself, intellectually, as small as they. It is degrading."

"Oh! Henriette!"

Lina looked at her, amazed. She who dearly loved all children, those toddling about, and those just beginning to read, those who were only soft flesh to coddle and kiss; she who walked by the Luxembourg expressly to hear their merry cries, and stopped to watch their sports with shovel and sand, to gaze at their slumbers, protected by their nurses' capes, or by the umbrellas of their perambulators; she who smiled into all little questioning eyes, and who, if she saw one of those tender heads exposed to wind or sun, flew to the inattentive nurse, to tell her to change the position of her arm or the umbrella: "Nurse, look at your child!" It seemed monstrous to her, this absence of the maternal sentiment in a woman. To see these two women together one could readily understand the difference in their temperaments — the one, born for motherhood, with small head, broad hips, calm countenance; the other, shaped like a bill-hook, with awkward angles, and long, flat, rough hands, like those one sees clasped closely together in primitive paintings.

Sometimes Mme. Ebsen interposed:

"But, my good Henriette, why do you continue in your occupation of bringing up children, if it is so distasteful to you? Why do you not return to your parents? You say they are old, and alone, your mother is infirm, and you could assist her with her household cares — aid her in the washing, and do a little cooking."

"As well marry, then," interrupted Henriette

quickly. "No thanks! I am no housekeeper; and I have a horror of all those menial tasks that occupy only the hands."

"One can, however, always think," commented Éline. But the other, paying no attention, went on:

"Besides, my people are poor, and I should be a burden to them . . . then, they are peasants, and are incapable of understanding me."

At this Mme. Ebsen was indignant:

"That is just like those Papists, with their convents. It is not enough that they shall tear daughters and sons away from their parents, of whose old age they are the natural supports, but they must kill even every remembrance, every sentiment of affection for their family. I must say they are pretty places, your prisons of the good God!"

Henriette Briss was not angry, but by all kinds of arguments and quotations defended her beloved convent. She had passed eleven delightful years in one, with no realization of the passage of time, with no responsibility, absorbed in God, in an unconsciousness whose awakening had been hard and bitter: "Come, Madame Ebsen, in this age of materialism, there is no other refuge for high-minded souls."

The good woman was choked with anger:

"The very idea! The very idea! But why don't you return to your convent? — a lot of idle, silly creatures!"

At this moment, a deluge of notes and arpeggios

drowned, swept away the discussion. The wall-flowers became discreetly animated, and approached the piano, while in her limpid, tender voice Éline began a romance of Chopin. Then it was Grandmother's turn. They wanted an old Scandinavian song, which Éline translated line by line for Lorie. The aged Grandmother sat up proudly in her chair and in tremulous tones quavered the heroic air of King Christian, standing near the main-mast all wrapped in smoke; or sometimes there was a melancholy invocation to the distant fatherland:

> "Denmark, with fair fields and meadows
> Bounded by the azure sea."

There is now no more singing at the Ebsens'. The piano is silent, the candles extinguished. The old Danish woman has gone to a country bounded by no azure sea, a land of fair fields and meadows, but so distant and so vast, that from it no one has ever returned.

IV.

MORNING HOURS.

A FEW days after the death of Grandmother, the little Lories were at home alone, father at the office, nurse at market, door locked with a double turn of the key, according to Sylvanire's custom when she left the house. She had lost none of her terror and distrust since her arrival, believing, for example, in an immense traffic in stolen children, organized in Paris to furnish the great city with tricksters who performed in the streets, and with harpists who played before the cafés, and even — horrible to think of — material with which to make nice little warm pies. Therefore, when she left Fanny and Maurice at home, they invariably heard the same command of the mother goat to her kids:

"Above all things, keep the door locked . . . and open to no one but Romain."

Romain, the man with the basket, who was such a puzzle to poor Grandmother, had arrived from Algeria a few days after the Lories, at the exact time of the installation of his successor over there, for he, also, had been a functionary. To his duties of door-keeper and gardener at the Sub-Prefecture, he added the offices of coachman, steward, and husband of Sylvanire, but the latter was such a

trifling one, that it is not worth mentioning. La Berrichonne had found it difficult to decide on this marriage. Since her affair at Bourges, the handsomest man in the world would not have caused her a moment's thought; still less this little, puny, stammering Romain, a head shorter than herself, with a complexion the color of an omelet cooked in oil, brought back from Sénégal, where, on leaving the navy, he had worked as gardener at the governor's mansion.

But her employers liked him so well, and then the fellow was so kind and obliging, so skilful in all occupations, he knew how to arrange such beautiful bouquets — they were as big as trees — he could amuse the children in such ingenious ways, he stole such tender glances at her, that after a long time, when she had done her best to discourage him, even telling him of her misfortune with the artillery student, Sylvanire had finally consented.

"It shall be as you like, my poor Romain, but truly . . . " and the mimicry of her broad shoulders seemed to say:

"Funny idea you have there!"

Romain's response was an unintelligible but ardent sputtering, in which were mingled oaths of eternal affection, and wild projects of vengeance against the whole Artillery Corps. "Bless' pig!" That was his pet expression, "Blessed pig!" a habit which he had never been able to overcome. All the unexpressed sentiments of the heart were summed up in that word. The day on which the Admiral of

Genouilly had saved him miraculously from court-martial, the day when Sylvanire's mistress had advised her to marry him, Romain had thanked them both with: "Bless' pig, Admiral! Bless' pig, Madame Lorie!" and those words stood for the most beautiful and eloquent protestations of gratitude.

Married, their life remained the same as before, she in the house with her employers, he at his door and in the garden — but never together. At night, Sylvanire watched over her invalid mistress, and after Madame went away she continued to sleep upstairs on the children's account, while her husband cooled his toes all alone in the big bed furnished him by the government. After months of this severe régime, scarcely relieved by a few gleams of tenderness, had come the overthrow of his patron, and the order for Sylvanire to bring Maurice and Fanny to Paris.

"All right, but what about me?" asked Romain, as he tied up the boxes.

"You may do as you like, my poor man. . . . But, at any rate, I am going."

What he would like to do, *parbleu*, was to be with her, to have a home together; and from the moment when she promised him that in Paris Monsieur would take them both, that they would be really keeping house, Romain resigned his place without regret.

When he arrived in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, and Sylvanire, with a gesture that spoke volumes, showed him the little ones, the boxes piled in heaps, the evident poverty, the poor man could

say nothing but "Bless' pig, wife!" It was plain to see that, for the present, they could not live together. No need of a coachman there, nor of a gardener or steward either.

"Sylvanire is sufficient for the present," declared M. Lorie, in his lordly manner, and he advised Romain to look for something to do elsewhere, the present arrangement being, of course, only temporary. Besides, as Sylvanire said, many married people in Paris are out at service, and are compelled to live apart; they see each other from time to time, and love each other all the more, perhaps, on this account. A broad grin, so engaging, so amiable, lit up the face beneath the white three-cornered cap.

"Avast, then. I am off to search for something to do," said Romain; and it must be admitted that he succeeded in finding work in less time than his Prefect.

He had only to go down to the banks of the Seine, and mingle with that crowd of rag-pickers which the good river supports, to have a choice of several professions. He could be a wharf-porter, a stevedore, he could work at one of the locks, or in a wash-house. He decided finally on a place at the dam *de la Monnaie* because it was something of a government employment, and he had, like Lorie, the administrative fever. His work was hard, and kept him closely confined; but as soon as he could get off, he ran to the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, always having some surprise in his big basket, the perquisites of the assistant lock-keeper.

Sometimes, by the breaking up of a raft, there were three or four splendid logs still wet from their long journey down the Seine, or, again, it might be some apples, or a package of coffee. Whatever he brought was given to Sylvanire, but the whole family profited by the gift; and often he came with a fry, a side of beef, or some other thing entirely foreign to the river.

For some time Romain's visits had been at longer intervals. He had just been promoted to the station of head lock-keeper at the dam of Petit-Port, three miles from Paris: one hundred francs a month, with heating, lights, and a tiny cottage on the water's edge, with a garden on one side where he could cultivate flowers and vegetables. What a fortune! Nevertheless, he would never have consented to go so far away from Sylvanire, if she had not absolutely insisted upon it. Now that it would soon be summer, she would bring the children to see him, and they could stay several days. It would be equal to a visit to the country to the little dears. And who knows if they might not even be able to settle there soon, just the two of them! She would not explain further; and the lock-keeper, mad with joy, had gone to take possession of his new post, after which there were only very short visits, at long intervals and between trains.

Romain having left the city, there was to be no exception; when the maid went out, they were absolutely forbidden to open the door. But, with charming ingenuity, these little Algerians, accus-

tomed to living in the open air, and who for so long a time had lived behind their shutters, closed in order to conceal their poverty, now opened wide their windows, on a level with the street, without reflecting that a single stride would bring one inside the house. But, what was there to be feared in such a peaceable street, where the cats dozed in the sunshine, and the pink claws of the pigeons scratched between the paving-stones? Besides, they were proud to be seen, now that they had beds, chairs, a wardrobe, and shelves for their portfolios and books.

Of their former furniture, utilized by Sylvanire for kindling wood, there remained only one or two packing-boxes, from which the pupil of the *Borda* carved sail-boats and row-boats. It was in this way that the young man was preparing for Navale. He had acquired from Romain this taste for nautical constructions; and Lorie, who at once thought this an indication of his vocation, had early formed the habit of presenting his son, — on reception evenings at the Sub-Prefecture, when the children were brought in, with:

"Here is our sailor boy," or, of calling out in a proud voice:

"Hey! Maurice, the *Borda!*"

The little fellow, was at first enchanted with the respect shown by his companions for that glorious profession, but especially for his midshipman's cap — his mother's idea — but when it meant serious business, when, staring him in the face, he saw mathematics and trigonometry, both

as little to his taste as the ocean and its adventures, his dream was over. Everywhere he was addressed as the sailor, and he dared no longer protest. From that time, his life was embittered, and his face assumed a dull, lamentable expression. He was depressed by the very mention of the *Borda*, with which every one bombarded him. His nose lengthened over equations, drawings and diagrams, geographical and geometrical figures, in big books, far too advanced for his understanding. He remained perpetually the future pupil at Navale, terrified by all he was obliged to learn to be admitted, more frightened still at the idea that perhaps he would not be received there.

In spite of all, the taste of his childhood persisted; and he was never happier than when Fanny asked him to make her a boat. At that very moment he was engaged in the construction of a splendid one, a sloop the equal of which had never been seen in the lake of the Luxembourg. He was working eagerly, all his tools on the window-sill, — hammer, saw, jointing-plane, which his little sister handed him as he needed them, while all the ragamuffins of the neighborhood, pantaloons in tatters, suspenders falling over torn sleeves, watched him admiringly from the street.

Suddenly there is a shout.

"Look out there! Look out!"

There is a great noise in the street; dogs bark, children and pigeons scatter to make way for a handsome carriage, with piebald horses, and chestnut-colored livery, which has just drawn up exactly

before the Lories' door. A tall, lean, old woman, dressed in a black gown with cape to match, descends from the carriage, and flashes on the two children a sharp glance from wicked eyes, ambuscaded behind a pair of heavy eyebrows, thick as moustaches.

"Does Madame Ebsen live here?"

With compressed jaws, and clenched fists, the *Borda* pupil, to his sister's great admiration, answers courageously:

"No, on the floor above," and quickly closes the window on this vision of the black lady, just like the one in all of Sylvanire's stories.

Fanny whispers, breathless:

"That's one for sure."

"I think so too."

Then, after a moment, when the footsteps ascending the stairs become fainter:

"Did you see how she looked at us? I thought she was coming in through the window."

"I should like to have seen that," replies the sailor, but without conviction. And, so long as they know that woman is upstairs, just over their heads, and that carriage is at the door, right in front of them, shutting out the street from view, they stay still as mice, not daring so much as to speak or breathe, or even drive a nail. At last, they hear Mme. Ebsen's voice as she accompanies some one to the landing. A dress brushes against their door. She is going out. The pupil of the *Borda*, to be sure, lifts a corner of the curtain, but drops it again quickly. The woman is

there, looking at him behind the casement with devouring eyes, as if she would carry him away. Then the carriage door slams, the horses stamp, they start, and the shadow that the carriage made before the window vanishes like an ugly dream.

"Well, really!" says little Fanny, with a sigh of relief.

That evening, when Lorie went upstairs with Fanny for her lesson, he found Mme. Ebsen still proud and excited from her fine visitor.

"Yes, but who was it? I heard about a carriage . . . "

With pride she gave him a large, heavy visiting-card.

JEANNE AUTHEMAN

Founder and President of the Work of the Evangelist Dames.

Paris. · Port-Sauveur.

"Madame Autheman? The wife of the banker?"

"Not she, herself, but some one whom she sent to ask Lina to translate a collection of prayers and meditations."

And she showed him a small gilt-edged book, lying on the table. It had this title: *Morning Hours*, by Mme. —— with the emblem: "A woman lost the world, a woman shall save it." They needed two translations, one in English, and one in German, for which they would pay three sous a prayer, in each language.

"A singular traffic, is it not?" asked Lina, with-

out raising her head from Fanny's exercise that she was correcting.

"Why no, Linette, I assure you. At this price, one can manage to do it," replied Mme. Ebsen, in her most matter-of-fact tone. The good woman was no mystic; then, lowering her voice, so as not to disturb the lesson, she spoke to her neighbor about the strange person who had been sent, Mlle. ——, the name was on the card, *Anne de Beuil, Hôtel Autheman.* Yes indeed! *de Beuil* in two words; nevertheless she seemed more like a peasant, or a housekeeper, than a lady of quality. Entirely unembarrassed and making herself at home, she inquired if the ladies saw many people, and whom they received. She also examined Lina's photograph on the mantelpiece, and found it too gay.

"Too gay!" exclaimed Lorie, indignantly, who suffered to see the fair young face clouded by sorrow since the death of Grandmother.

"Ah! and she said many other things. . . . That we were frivolous creatures, and did not live enough in God. She gave me a sermon — a regular sermon, with gestures and quotations. It is a pity that Henriette was not here. They would have made a pretty pair of preachers."

"Has Mademoiselle Briss gone away?" inquired Lorie, who was interested in that flighty girl, doubtless because she considered him so practical.

"Yes, a week ago, with the Princess Souvorine, who engages her as companion. It is a splendid position for her, and no children."

"She must be satisfied, then?"

"Quite the contrary. She is in despair. We received a letter written from Vienna, and she longs for her cell in the Rue du Cherche-Midi. Ah! poor Henriette!"

And, returning to the subject of her morning visitor, and to her reproach that they did not live enough in God, she continued:

"In the first place, so far as Lina is concerned, that is not true. She plays the organ every Sunday in the Rue Chauchat, and never misses a service. As for me, have I ever had the time to be pious? I should like to have seen that Mademoiselle de Beuil with an old mother to take care of, and a child in arms. I had to run about giving private lessons from early morning in all kinds of weather, from one end of Paris to another. In the evening I would fall on my bed like a stone, too tired to pray, or even to think. But was n't it piety also, to make Mamma happy to the end of her life, and to give Lina a good education, from which she is now profiting? Ah! dear little Lina, she will never have to undergo the harsh experiences that I have suffered."

And, becoming animated at the recollection of her trials, she told Lorie how she used to give lessons in the back part of shops to persons as needy as herself, the exchange she sometimes made of an hour of German for one of French, and the exactions of some of the parents. There was one stout young girl with whom she had to walk while teaching her languages, having her re-

cite irregular verbs as they trudged through the wind and rain from the Arc de l'Étoile to the Bastille. This sort of thing continued for years, with all the privations and humiliations that must be endured by a poor woman — the shabby clothes, the breakfasts sacrificed to save six sous for omnibus fare — until the day she had entered Mme. de Bourlon's school as instructor. It was a very swell school for none but the daughters of bankers and rich merchants. There was Léonie Rougier, now the Countess d'Arlot, and Deborah Becker, who has become Baroness Gerspach. It was there, also, that she knew a pretty, singular girl named Jeanne Châtelus, a fanatical Protestant who always kept a little Bible in her pocket and held actual religious meetings for her companions in the corner of the playground during recreation hour. It was rumored that she was soon to be married to a young missionary, and go out with him to convert the Basutos. In fact, she left the school suddenly and three weeks later became — Mme. Autheman.

Lorie made a gesture of surprise.

"Why, yes," said Mme. Ebsen, smiling. "You can readily understand, between a penniless missionary and the richest banker in Paris — But, bless me, she must have had courage. Her husband is a fright. All one side of his face is disfigured by an enormous wen, which he conceals under a black silk band. These skin eruptions are hereditary in the Autheman family. The mother had them on her hands and arms, and night and

day wore gloves that reached to her elbows. It is the same thing with their cousins, the Beckers. But the son is affected worse than all the rest, and one must be terribly anxious to be rich to marry that man."

From Grandmother's corner, Lina, who had just finished the lesson, and was turning over the leaves of the *Morning Hours* lying upon the table, protested gently:

"How do you know if it was a desire to be rich? Perhaps there was also a feeling of pity, a need to devote, to sacrifice herself to some wretched creature. The world is so wicked, and so uncharitable in its criticisms!"

While speaking, she bent over the pages to be translated, the soft cheeks a little pale from recent sorrow, and the fair, heavy braids, with their silvery gleam, fell on the book.

Suddenly, turning half-way around to her mother:

"See here, Mamma, I think this concerns me, the young lady who is too gay. Listen: *Laughter and gayety are the accompaniments of a corrupt heart. Our hearts have no need of these things, when the peace of God reigns in them.*"

"The fact is," said the mother, "that I never saw that little Châtelus laugh; and, of course, it is she who wrote this book."

Lina interrupted hastily:

"Here is something even stronger —"

She stood up, and, shuddering, read the following words:

"*A father, a mother, a husband, and children deceive the affection. In any case they die. To attach one's heart to them is to make a poor reckoning.*"

"How can one be so *stoobide!*" exclaimed Mme. Ebsen, whose native accent returned when she was greatly excited.

"Listen to what follows," Éline continued, emphasizing the words: *A wise reckoning is to love Christ and Him only. Christ does not deceive, Christ does not die, but he is jealous of our affection, and he claims it altogether. It is for this reason that we make war on idols, and expel from our hearts everything that might rival him.* You understand, Mamma, it is a sin for us to love each other. You must tear me from your heart, and Christ must come between us and separate us with his two crucified arms. Such things are infamies. Never will I translate that book."

She made a vehement gesture so extraordinary in that temperament of sweetness and serenity, that the child standing beside her felt the nervous reaction, a shudder on the pale slender little face.

"Why no — why no — I am not angry," said Lina, taking the little one on her lap and embracing her so affectionately that the father, without knowing why, colored with pleasure. Madame was the first to regain her composure.

"Come, Linette, we were wrong to become so excited. As if it were necessary to take to heart all the nonsense that one reads and hears! It is true that this lady's prayer is very stupid, but that need not prevent us from loving each other."

They exchanged one of those glances of confidence such as can only exist between persons of the same blood.

"No matter," said Lina, still irritated, "such foolishness is contagious, and can do a great deal of harm, especially with young heads and natures easily influenced."

"I must say that I agree with Mademoiselle," added Lorie, "although, of course — "

Mme. Ebsen shrugged her shoulders.

"Nonsense! Who reads these things, anyhow?" They were of no more importance than those little Anglican tracts that one sees distributed in the Champs Élysées like advertisements of clothing-houses and one-priced restaurants. Besides, there was also the business side of it. They were not at all embarrassed by Lorie's presence, and talked quite openly. Oh well! at three sous a prayer they could make something. They would both work at it, and when this volume was finished, they would, of course, have others, and when one was not rich one ought not to disdain any increase of income. It would be something to pay for Lina's trousseau when she should marry.

Before the end of the discussion, Lorie arose hastily:

"Come, Fanny, say good-night."

This little *salon* of the Ebsens', the most cheerful, the most friendly place in the world to him and his children, suddenly seemed dull, indifferent to his existence. He felt as a stranger there making a formal call; and this, simply because good

Mme. Ebsen had treated him as a middle-aged man of no consequence, in speaking in his presence of Lina's marriage.

Ah! yes, this charming girl would marry; she would marry soon, and he who should win her might well be proud of her. She was so well-informed, so full of courage, so orderly, so sensible, and, with it all, of such tender indulgence. Nevertheless, this thought made him sad, and pursued him down to his own home, into his little chamber that overlooked the garden. The children slept in the next room, and he could hear the little girl prattling to Sylvanire, who was undressing her, telling her about all that had happened that evening. "Mademoiselle said . . . Mademoiselle was angry . . ." This Mademoiselle occupied a very important place in the thoughts of the little orphan. But, once married, she would have children of her own, and could no longer look after the children of others. And the poor man thought how Éline, by simply passing through his house one dreary day, had transformed it.

Then, to divert his thoughts, he began, as he called it, "to make a few classifications." To make classifications was his mania, his supreme resource when he was anxious or distressed. It consisted in putting to rights a heap of green pasteboard boxes, numbered and labelled in varied penmanship: *Business letters, Family, Political, Miscellaneous.* Since the time that he had labelled these precious documents, never added to, he had been obliged to change their classification by

removing them from a blue wrapper to one of maroon color and that satisfied his mania.

The package on which he laid his hand this evening, bore across the first page, like a name carved on a tomb: *Valentine.* These letters, written the year of her death, were all he had ever received from his wife, for they had never before been separated. There were many, and long ones. The first were sad enough, filled with tender injunctions for the children's health and his own. There were also many messages to Sylvanire and Romain concerning household matters — all showing the anxieties of the absent mother. Then, little by little, there were murmurs and nervous complaints. Soon there was anger, despair, and rebellion against a fate, which, scarcely concealed by the physician's deceptions, she knew to be pitiless.

With these cries of grief and these sobs of despair there was always her concern for the house, for the children: "Do not forget to have the mattresses carded." And the yellowed writing, which sometimes soaked the paper as if mingled with tears, with its irregular, badly formed letters, its hesitations, marked also the sinister progress of the disease. The handwriting of the last letter bore no more resemblance to the first than the sad face, drawn and hollow, that greeted him in the peasants' room at Amboise, recalled the wife who had left him a year before. At that time the malady had made no ravages, and her rich, ripe beauty had caused the sailors on the quay to turn and admire her.

This letter Valentine had written after he had left her, when she had sent him to Paris to save his position, without telling him that she knew she was dying.

"I knew very well," she wrote, "that the end had come, that we should never see each other again: but I had to let you go to see the Minister without any delay, for your own sake, for our children's. Ah! the dreary days already numbered, that we cannot pass together. To think that, with a husband and two children, I must die all alone!" After this last bitter cry of her soul, there were only words of resignation. She was again the same calm, patient creature that she had been before she was stricken, encouraging and counselling him. Of course, he would be replaced, the government could not afford to lose so valuable an official. But the house, the education of the children, all the things that a busy man must leave to others, — these were the questions about which the dying mother was most anxious. Now that Sylvanire was married, she would not always remain with them; besides, faithful as she was, she was but a servant.

And deliberately, delicately, with carefully chosen words that must have caused her much suffering to write — for all this part of her letter was in fragments, with long breaks — she spoke to him of a possible marriage, later on, some day. He was still such a young man.

"Only, choose well; and give our little ones a mother who shall be in reality a mother."

Never had these last words of admonition, so often re-read since her death, impressed Lorie as they did this evening, as he listened, in the silence of the sleeping house, to a gentle footstep moving about on the floor above. A window was closed, the curtains were drawn; and through the big tears that trickled down the page, and moistened the words, he read again and again:

"Only, choose well. . . ."

V.

THE AUTHEMAN HÔTEL.

THOSE who saw it ten years ago, during the lifetime of the old mother, would have scarcely recognized the home of the celebrated bankers, one of the oldest and handsomest remaining in the Marais. It stood on the corner of the Rue Pavée, with its turret *en moucharabie*, its high vermicular walls, its irregular windows, surmounted by pediments and capitals, its dormer windows, with carved facings, opening from the high roof. At that period it had, in common with all those princely dwellings transformed into business houses, an appearance of life and industry; and under its wide porch, there was a continual coming and going of wagons and drays, crossing the immense court-yard, and doing duty between the Paris house and the refineries of Petit-Port.

Below on the great stone stairway used to stand old Becker, Madame's brother, with pen behind his ear, noting the arrival and consignment of bullion, sent off in leaden chests, for at that time the Authemans were gold merchants, and furnished all the jewellers of France with the rough material. At the same time, in the vast *salon* on the ground-floor, its walls decorated with vague, mythological paintings, the old woman sat, perched at a pulpit-

shaped desk, in hat and gloves, her parrot's roost close by, and watched, over the grated windows, the scales, weighing all purchases and sales, and, in her harsh, hissing voice, audible above the clinking of the metal and the hum of business, calling out:

"Moses, weigh that again. You have ten centigrammes too much."

But all that is entirely changed since the time of the old lady's death, when there disappeared from each side of the great door the black marble slabs inlaid with gold, on which were cut the words:

Maison Autheman, founded in 1804.—*Gold metal bought and sold.* To-day the house is only used as a bank, coining ingots, and keeping in motion the public funds, without wagons or leaden chests. The coupé of Mme. Jeanne Autheman is the only noise that resounds on the court-yard pavement, and on the morning that Lina crossed the threshold of the house to return the translations she had made, she was struck by the majestic silence of the old walls.

The *concierge*, in his long frock-coat and white cravat, looked like a church sexton. When Éline passed from the porch on the left, and ascended the old, stone stairway, with its deep recesses, which she discovered in the dim, cathedral light that fell from irregularly constructed windows, the bell which announced her, ringing twice, awakened so many solemn echoes in the empty, solitary place, that her heart throbbed with an emotion she could not define.

Anne de Beuil received her. In her harsh, rough voice, her small eyes sunken behind bushy eyebrows, she announced that *la Présidente* would see her after a while.

"You have the prayers? Give them to me. . . ." And she disappeared through a high, arched door whose decorations had been daubed over with a sombre tone, more in harmony with the furniture and hangings of the room.

Éline waited, seated on a wooden bench, like those one sees in church. Others were arranged around the room, or piled together at the back, near a cabinet-organ covered with a cloth; but the stained-glass windows admitted a light so dim that the young girl could not distinguish clearly this strange place, nor could she read the inscriptions on the ancient wainscoting, where formerly wreaths of cupids danced, scattering roses, and Floras and Pomonas, bringing their fresh attributes.

From the adjoining room came the sound of mourning and sobs with the murmur of a scolding voice. Moving to the end of the bench, so that she might not hear the lugubrious noise — for it troubled her — the movement awoke some one in that room of which she thought herself the only occupant, and a voice very close to her cried:

"Moses — Moses, weigh that again."

A beam of light from the door, which opened at that instant, showed her a parrot in a huge cage, an aged parrot with tangled feathers, and untrimmed beak, just the bird to strengthen one's belief in the longevity of these creatures.

"The President will see you now, Mademoiselle," said at the same time Anne de Beuil, crossing the reception room, accompanied by a tall, haggard person, her red eyes visible even under her travelling veil. Suddenly Anne de Beuil, also, perceived the parrot, which had become terrified as she approached.

"Ah! you foul vermin of a heretic, here you are again!" She sprang at the cage, and dragged it away, shaking it furiously, and upsetting the water, sand, and little broken mirror, while the wretched bird, in a broken voice, and with the characteristic obstinacy of the old, continued to cry, "Moses, Moses," as loud as it could, ordering him to weigh it again.

Éline entered the presence of Mme. Autheman, whom she found at her desk in a large office, like that of a business man. The narrow, prominent forehead, beneath smooth, black bands, the delicate nose, and compressed lips, struck her at once.

"Sit down, my child."

Her voice had all the coldness of her complexion, of her waning youth, of her thirty-five years. Dressed, not without a certain coquetry that belongs to all pretty women, in a simple gown and a cape of a religious order, similar to the one worn by Anne de Beuil, but of richer material, she sat as upright as a clergyman. She wrote slowly, carefully; then, having finished the letter and sealed it, she rang the bell, and gave a package of missives to the servant who answered, designating

each letter with a short, authoritative gesture: "For London, Geneva, Zurich, Port-Sauveur. . . ." It reminded one of the mail hour in a great business house. Then, wearied with her mental exertion, she leaned back in her office chair, and crossing her hands over her cape, regarded Éline with a tender smile, that imparted to her eyes, instead of an expression of warmth, a bluish light, like the reflection from a glacier.

"This, then, is the little wonder!"

And immediately she began to compliment Éline on the translations which she had just examined. Never had her books been understood and interpreted with such intelligence and correctness. She hoped that Éline would often work for her.

"By the way, let me pay you."

She took her pen, and on the corner of a notebook, rapidly made out the account, as accurately as an accountant could have done. . . . Six hundred prayers at fifteen centimes. So much for the German. . . . So much for the English. . . . She handed the young girl a check for the amount to be cashed below at the treasurer's office. Then, seeing her rise to leave, she bade her sit down again, as she wanted to inquire about Mme Ebsen, whom she had known at Mme. de Bourlon's; and she spoke of that poor Grandmother, recently called away so suddenly and cruelly.

"At least," she said to Éline, narrowing her clear eyes and darting a keen glance directly into

hers. "At least, I hope she knew the Saviour before dying?"

Éline was embarrassed, and did not know what to reply, incapable as she was of a falsehood, even if the President had not seemed familiar with every detail of their lives. Grandmother, it is true, was not a professing Christian. During the last year of her life especially, whether from indifference or from a superstitious fear, she never spoke of religious matters, but seemed to cling to the material side of that frail existence, which was even then slipping away from her. Then came that sudden, almost terrible end, the pastor arriving when all was over, the last toilet made, the white sheet folded over the cold form. No, she could not say that Grandmother had known the Saviour before she died.

"Ah! poor soul shut out from the glory of God . . ."

With changed voice, hands clasped, and in an oratorical manner, Mme. Autheman rose.

"Where are you now, poor soul? How you must suffer; how you must curse those who left you without succour." She continued in this prophetic strain, but Éline heard no more. At first embarrassed, now her heart was wrung, and the tears were ready to flow at the thought that Grandmother might be suffering, and through her fault. Beneath a tranquil exterior, this Éline Ebsen concealed an emotional nature, where slumbered all the sentiment and mysticism of the woman of the North.

"Grandmother suffers . . ." Her heart burst forth from its childish bonds in choking sobs that disfigured the fair, soft flesh, and rounded outlines of her face.

"Come, come. Calm yourself . . ."

Mme. Autheman approached and took her hand. She knew, through M. Birk, that Éline was a girl of good sentiments, and, according to the world's standards, fulfilled her Christian duties; but God required more, of her especially, who lived in an atmosphere of indifference. She must acquire faith for those in whom it was lacking, a faith broad, lofty, and protecting, like that great tree in which the birds of the air build their nests. How could she do this? By seeking spiritual companionship, the society of souls bound together only in Christ.

"Come and see me often, either here or at Port-Sauveur. I shall be happy to receive you. We have in Paris, too, very profitable prayer-meetings. Soon one of my *workers*"—she emphasized the word—"she who left the room a while ago, is going to make a public profession of religion. You must come and hear her. Her words will inflame your zeal. . . . Now, leave me, I am pressed for time." She made a gesture as if to dismiss her, perhaps to bless her. "Above all, do not weep. I will commend you to Him who saves and pardons. . . ." She spoke in a tone of assurance, as of some one who could refuse her nothing.

Éline left the room in a state of violent agitation.

In her trouble she forgot to cash the check, and was obliged to return, and reascend the great staircase, from which opened three high glass doors, screened half-way with green linen shades. There was a counter, precisely like that in a bank, with its wicket doors, and grated windows, people waiting, or moving about, and the clash of coins, moved from pile to pile. But here, as in the other room, there was an air of coldness and stiffness, the clerks were distant and reserved, there was the same dark coloring on the walls and ceiling which clouded the allegories and misty figures over the door, the former pride of the Autheman *hôtel.*

Some one spoke to her from a window, over which was the sign: *Port-Sauveur.* Inside a grated cage, standing behind the cashier, and reading over his shoulder, was a man who raised his head as she timidly presented the check, and she saw a wretched, hollow face, with cavernous eyes, and a swollen cheek concealed under a black silk bandage, which gave to the side of his face that was visible a broken-hearted, bitter expression. Éline thought:

"It is Autheman. How ugly he is!"

"Is he not?" the banker's smile seemed to reply, as he sadly met her eyes.

All the way home, pursued by the misery of that smile on the leper-like face, she asked herself, again and again, how a young girl could have given herself to a husband like that. Was it from compassion, or that pitiable love which some women feel for the

unfortunate? The rigid Protestant whom she had just seen, seemed to her to be far removed from all such weaknesses, too exalted, also, to be influenced by the degrading question of money? What, then, was it? But, to explain the mystery of that strange nature, of that heart closed as tightly as a Protestant church on week-days, abandoned to emptiness, as silent as a deserted temple, Éline must have known the history of that Jeanne Châtelus, the former pupil of Mme. de Bourlon's school.

She was from Lyons, the daughter of a wealthy silk merchant. Châtelus and Treilhard was one of the most important houses in the city. Born at Brotteaux, facing the great Rhone, which, rapid and joyous as it enters Arles or Avignon, with the chiming of bells, and the chirping of grasshoppers, borrows from the Lyonnaise fogs, from its heavy, rain-streaked clouds, the leaden hue of its waters. While losing none of its impetuosity, the river reflects the temperament of the Lyonnaise people — quick-tempered and cold, full of caprice, and, at the same time, absorbed in melancholy exaltation. The character of Jeanne was typical of the country, developed still more by environment and circumstances.

The mother having died young, the father, entirely absorbed in business, had confided the education of his child to an old aunt of a Protestantism narrow, exaggerated, and full of petty observances. On Sunday no diversion was allowed except that derived from attendance at the church services, or,

in winter when it rained — and it rains frequently in Lyons — a family service in the great *salon*, never opened but on this day, where, seated on the uncomfortable hair-cloth furniture, gathered the father, the aunt, the English governess, and the servants.

In a nasal tone, the aunt drawled lengthy prayers and readings to which the father listened, one hand over his eyes, as if engaged in religious contemplation, but, in reality, turning over in his mind certain speculations of his silks. Jeanne, already a serious child, with a mind overwhelmed in thoughts of death, punishment, and original sin, never lifted her eyes from her religious devotion that she did not see from the streaming windows the great Rhone dimly outlined, billowy and troubled as the sea after a storm.

With such a system of education as this, the child's growth to girlhood was accompanied with difficulties. She became thin and nervous, and was ordered to go to the mountains. There were sojourns in the Engadine, at Montreux, near Geneva, or in one of those green places that seem imbued with the hidden sadness and gloom of the Lake of the Four-Cantons. One season, when Jeanne was eighteen years old, they settled at Grindelwald, in the Bernese Alps, a little village of guides built on a plateau, crouched at the foot of the Wetterhorn, the Silberhorn, and the Jungfrau, whose slender, dazzling summit could be distinguished above a multitude of snowy peaks and glaciers.

Excursionists come there for breakfast, to procure guides and horses; and all day long on the one steep street of the little village, there is a tumult, a throng of arriving and departing tourists, alpenstock in hand, or forming long processions, which disappear along the winding paths, keeping time to the slow step of the beasts, and the heavy measured tread of the carriers. Through the hedges one can catch glimpses of fluttering blue veils. Aunt Châtelus, however, discovered behind the hotel garden an available chalet, removed from the crowd of mountain climbers. It was a charming location, facing a pine forest whose fresh perfumes were mingled with the resinous odors of the wood in their bed-chambers. They nestled at the foot of the eternal snows, and at certain times a rainbow cleft the sky with flushes of exquisite blue and rose.

There was no sound, save that of the distant rumbling of a torrent falling over the rocks, the bubbling of its foam, the *cantilène*, with the five notes of the Alpine horn echoing among forests and rocks, or the dull thunder of an avalanche mingling with the report of a gun shot off in some grotto on the road to the small glacier. Sometimes, at night, there came a storm, and the wind blew from the north; and in the morning a dust of light snow, like delicate, transparent lacework, whitened the steep ascent, the pine trees, the pastures, to melt in the noonday sun into a hundred little streamlets of sparkling silver, that tumbled down the heights, losing themselves among the

moss and rocks, or forming cascades, with a slow movement of the water.

But these wonders of Alpine nature were lost upon Jeanne and her aunt, who spent their afternoons, in company with some pious old English and Genevese ladies, on the ground-floor of their chalet conducting prayer-meetings. With curtains drawn and candles lighted, they sang hymns and read prayers; then each of these ladies expounded a text from the Bible as subtly as any professional preacher could have done. Clergymen, however, were not lacking at the hotel of the Jungfrau, nor theological students from Lausanne and Geneva; but these gentlemen — nearly all of them members of the Alpine Club — were concerning themselves in little else than mountain climbing. In the morning they could be seen with *piolets*, ropes, and guides, starting off on their jaunts; while in the evening they enjoyed the relaxation afforded by a game of chess, or they read the newspapers, or the younger ones even danced and sang comic songs to the accompaniment of the piano.

"And these are our priests!" exclaimed indignantly these old wiseacres, shaking their faded locks, or the loops of their hideous bonnets. Ah! if only they had been called to preach the Gospel, they would have brought to their vocation such zeal, such faith that it would have affected and set on fire the whole world. This dream of the apostleship of women arose in all their discussions. And why not women priests, since there were women Bachelors, and women doctors? The fact

is, that, with their faces fiery with zeal, or wan from exhaustion, and their plain black gowns which gave no indication of their sex, they might all have passed for old clergymen.

Jeanne Châtelus was infused with this mysticism by which she was surrounded, intensified in her case by the ardor that belongs to youth; and not the least curious feature of these prayer-meetings was to see this young girl of eighteen, pretty and restless, her raven hair brushed smoothly over the arched brow, her thin lips expressing determination and meditation, rise to expound the Holy Scriptures. The guests became devotees simply to hear her; and the chamber-maid at the chalet, a sturdy Swiss woman wearing a great butterfly cap, was so affected by Jeanne's sermons, that she acted as if *ébervigée*, spilling penitential tears in the morning chocolate, and talking to herself and prophesying as she swept the rooms or mopped the corridors.

Many other instances of Jeanne's pious influence were related. A village guide, Christian Ibenit, by name, had been found at the bottom of a *crevasse*, after a frightful fall. For ten days he lingered, in horrible tortures, filling his hut with howls and blasphemies, in spite of the visits and exhortations of the pastor. Jeanne went to see the man, and, taking her place by his pillow, gently and patiently reconciled the sufferer with the Saviour, so that he fell asleep in death as calmly and unconsciously as his little marmot, recently taken from his leafy bed, after six winter months of torpor.

This success completed the exaltation of the young Lyonnaise. She believed herself called to the Gospel mission, and spent the evenings in her room composing prayers and meditations. She affected a marked austerity of manner, and conversed with the same precision that she employed in her public addresses, interspersing her words with texts and Scriptural quotations. "*A woman lost the world, a woman shall save it.*" This ambitious device, which she afterwards adopted as a motto to be inscribed on her letter paper, even engraving it on the inside of her bracelets and rings, where other women have a tender sentiment or love cipher — this device was even then formulating in the young mind, and the work of the Evangelist Dames was already germinating, vaguely, indistinctly, and lost among a thousand other confused plans, when an accident determined her life.

Among the ladies attending the prayer-meetings was a Genevese, who was especially fond of Jeanne, the mother of one of the Theological students. This big, strapping fellow, who was preparing himself for the foreign mission field, was employing the time until he should go and convert the Basutos, by an enthusiastic indulgence in all the sports of the place, climbing peaks, riding horseback, tossing off Swiss champagne, *yodling*, like an Oberland herdsman, at the top of his lungs. The Genevese mother saw in Mlle. Châtelus, whom she knew to be very wealthy, a splendid match for her son, and very skilfully she paved the way for the marriage, by

extolling the heroism of the young missionary, who was ready to exile himself, and go forth into the wilderness for Jesus' sake.

What a joy it would be, if her poor son, before expatriating himself, should be able to find a truly Christian wife, who would consent to follow him in his Gospel mission, assisting him, taking his place, if need be! What a noble life for any woman, what an opportunity to consecrate herself to Christian work! Having once entered Jeanne's mind, the idea made its way alone, like those beards of darnel grass that children put in their sleeves, and that climb higher and higher at every movement of the arm.

Chance aided maternal finesse. The young people were pleased with each other; and, however far removed from earth were the thoughts of Mlle. Châtelus, it is still probable that she was favorably impressed by the elegant figure of the young theologian, and the strong, dark face beneath the little white cap worn by students of the University of Geneva. By degrees she fell into the habit of thinking of him, and he became associated with her plans for the future. She was even anxious about his frequent and dangerous ascents, and when he did not return in the evening, she lingered at her window, to watch a light on some inaccessible summit — the little lamp of one of those places of refuge which the Alpine Club has had built on every peak, and where belated excursionists may find a fire and a bed of hard boards.

The young girl, cold as she usually was, thought gently: "He is there! nothing has happened to him," and went to sleep content, and a little surprised — she, deprived of the tender rearing of a mother, whose sentiments hitherto had been limited to the love of God, and the hatred of sin — that her heart could be stirred by the thought of another than Christ. Nevertheless, religious emotion had a large share in this new love. When they spoke to each other to plight their troth, as they walked alone, on the shore of the Mer de Glace, before that vast horizon of congealed waves, what they said to each other would not have been out of place in the sanctuary. Their avowals and promises were as cold as the North wind that begins to blow during the first days of September, with a taste of snow that renders breathing difficult.

They promised solemnly to belong to each other, and to devote their lives to the spread of the Gospel, the glory and word of the living God. As they spoke, the glacial rocks trembled, and rolled beneath their feet, dimming with gray dust the blue crystals of the icy mass. He had still another year to study before being ordained. She, during this time, would work to prepare herself for the sacred mission. They would write to each other every week. All this settled, hand in hand, they stood close to each other in silence. The Genevese, calmer than his companion, shivered, and drew his coat collar about his neck. She, however, was burning with a fever to proselyte, her cheek flushed with the same rosy glow that the

setting sun still cast on the hoary and rigid peaks of the Jungfrau.

For a whole year they wrote to each other, letters of love and theology mingled, like the correspondence of Héloïse and her master, but corrected and chilled by Protestantism. As Jeanne was sincere in her wish to consecrate herself to her mission, she went to Paris to study English and geography at Mme. de Bourlon's, where she intended passing the few remaining months before her marriage. Strange as she seemed to all those wealthy and frivolous Parisian girls, Jeanne Châtelus nevertheless impressed them by the sincerity of her faith, her sibylline manner, and the story of her engagement and approaching departure for the mission field.

She led, moreover, a life apart from the other girls, having outside her classes the privilege of using a small room at the remote end of the dormitory, where, with two or three of her friends among the older pupils, she used to spend the evenings. There, as under the plane-trees during recreation hour, Jeanne spread the good news, exerting the magnetic power of her voice and eyes, and her indomitable passion for proselyting. She made several veritable converts, among others, Deborah Becker, a tall Jewess, with copper-colored hair, a niece of the widow Autheman. On her pale, creamy complexion, this pretty Deborah had a taint of the disease hereditary in the Autheman family. With the changing seasons, her face, neck, and arms were affected with crimson

blotches, as if a thorn tree had scratched her; and for several days she would be obliged to remain in the infirmary, covered with starch and salves.

The other boarding pupils, jealous of her immense fortune, used to say: "It is the Autheman gold that she is sweating." But Jeanne saw it in a different light and proved to Deborah that it was a divine punishment, the anger of God bearing on a race that obstinately refused to know him; and she tormented that weak mind with sermons and long theological arguments, even under the shadows of Petit-Port, the home of the widow Autheman, where Deborah often took her friend. The faith of the daughter of Israel was shaken, and she was willing to renounce it, to leave her father, her family, to follow Jeanne, and dwell with her and her husband in a tent, like Paul in the desert. Thus did Jeanne the Evangelist understand, even at that age, how to wrench hearts from their natural affections, to offer them to Jesus, all quivering and bruised from broken bonds.

But in the meanwhile a commercial crisis struck the money market at Lyons, completely ruined Châtelus and Treilhard, and changed entirely the matrimonial plans of the young theologian. The rupture was managed politely, but it took place under pretext that the health of the future missionary could not endure the amount of travelling that would be necessary, and also, that he realized that the virtues and the noble apostolic endowments of Mlle. Châtelus deserved a more glorious field for their exercise than the modest

parish in the Canton of Appenzell to which he resigned himself.

Jeanne, although making no sign of complaint, and allowing no one to suspect it, received from this base and humiliating deception a terrible blow. During the two months that she still passed under Mme. de Bourlon's roof, no one but Deborah knew of this sudden change in her destiny. She continued to elucidate the Bible, and to edify her following among the older girls, concealing henceforth under a serene exterior a bitter despair, and contempt for men and life. A yawning abyss was opened in this defiant soul by her first and only deception in love. The head alone and the mystic fire that burned beneath that visionary brow, survived the disaster. Her religious fervor still grew, but it was fierce, implacable, her favorite texts those of despair, or threats of malediction and punishment. And with it all there was her dream of evangelizing, of saving the world, mingled with secret anger against her impotence on account of her lack of money. How could she, alone and helpless, set out to convert unbelievers?

She thought of entering the Deaconess' Home in the Rue de Reuilly; but she knew the spirit and rule of the house, and that it was the duty of these semi-nuns to visit and care for the sick and afflicted. Now, concern for suffering humanity was distasteful to her and pity seemed irreligious, since all wounds, moral or physical, are so many blessed tests to draw us nearer to God.

One Thursday she was summoned to the parlor,

where she found old Mother Autheman, in her ubiquitous white bonnet and light-colored gloves. Informed of the break with the missionary, she had come to ask Jeanne to marry her son. The young girl wanted a week for consideration. She had often seen at Petit-Port that tall, silent young fellow, dispirited on account of his facial disfigurement, endeavoring at table to conceal with his hand the black bandage that swelled out over his frightful malady. As often happens in veiled or concealed faces, an extraordinary acuteness and ardor seemed concentrated in his eyes. Jeanne thought of him without the slightest feeling of repugnance. All men were now alike to her and of the same value. All were tainted, whether their hideousness was within or without. But fortune tempted her, a colossal fortune, to devote to the service of pious works. She would have accepted at once, but for the idea of marrying a Jew, a reprobate. An hour's conversation with Autheman, who was desperately in love, removed her scruples; and the marriage took place, not in the synagogue, but at the temple, to the great scandal of all Israel.

As soon as she was married, Jeanne began her work of evangelization in the very heart of Paris, much as if she had been among the Kaffirs. She was aided by all the resources of an immense fortune, for the Autheman coffers were open to her: and the tall chimneys of Petit-Port smoked night and day; gold was melted in the crucibles, and wagons, heavy with ingots, rolled by with the

means of redeeming the souls of the whole world. She had prayer-meetings in her *salon* in the Rue Pavée, and preached sermons — at first moderate in tone. And the widow Autheman, going upstairs to her room in the evening, used to hear their hymns, sung to the accompaniment of a melodion; and she sometimes met on the stairs, the weird, starved faces of those monomaniacs, in threadbare clothes and waterproofs dripping with mud — a dismal, faithful troup of necessitous catechumens.

She was, indeed, a little astonished at this life of austerity, at this renunciation of society by a young and pretty woman, but her son was happy, and she may have seen, perhaps, in all this mummery a safeguard for the poor invalid, so that, far from placing any obstacle in the way of her daughter-in-law, she facilitated her mission work in every way. Ah! if she had but known that one of the first and most ardent converts was Jeanne's husband himself, and that he was only waiting for his mother's death to be received, and make a public renunciation!

This reception of the Israelite Autheman into the Temple of the Oratory, was one of the great events of the close of the Empire. Every Sunday thereafter, could be seen on the seat of the deacons and elders, facing the pulpit, the knife-blade face, the disfigured and concealed cheek, of the celebrated gold merchant. His conversion gave Jeanne great weight among her followers: she became the "Madame Guyon" of Protestantism. Upright in her life, persevering in her work, she won the

esteem even of those who considered her enthusiasm as rank madness. To spread the good news into every corner of Paris, she hired large rooms in its most crowded districts, where she preached on certain days every week. She had, at first, as acolyte, no one but an old maid, formerly nurse and seamstress at Mme. de Bourlon's, a rabid Calvinist. She was descended from a family of noblemen of Charente who had been ruined by persecutions, and returned to their peasant origins.

The religion of Anne du Beuil retained all the narrow, fierce fanaticism of the Reformation prevalent at the time of the wars. The woman had eyes watchful and suspicious, a soul as ready for martyrdom as for battle, holding in contempt both ridicule and death — a coarse creature, with a strong provincial accent. On preaching days she would push herself into workshops and laundries, and even into the barracks, bestowing money, when necessary, to bring people to the gospel.

Meanwhile, the *hôtel* in the Rue Pavée was changed in appearance. Jeanne, while retaining the banking-house, suppressed the traffic of gold as savoring too strongly of jewry. Uncle Becker went elsewhere to carry on his business; the refineries of Petit-Port, or rather of Port-Sauveur, were torn down, and in their place erected a church and Evangelical schools. Soon of the old Autheman house, nothing remained but the ancient parrot that had belonged to the mother, and to which the banker was, on that account, much attached, but which Anne de Beuil detested, jost-

ling and chasing it from room to room, as the last *débris* of that reprobate family. It was the living image of the old gold-broker, Mother Autheman, the bird even reproducing her harsh voice, and hooked, Jewish nose.

VI.

THE LOCK.

"ROMAIN! There is Romain!"

This joyous cry from little Fanny, the moment the train stopped at the Ablon station, was the signal for a row of heads to appear at the car windows, the merry, noisy heads of Parisians escaping from the city to spend this Easter Monday, their first holiday of the season, in the fresh air, and bright sunshine of the country; and the droll appearance of the little man, and his laugh that spread from ear to ear, giving him the expression of a monkey, responded to the general good humor, and from one end of the train to the other was heard the same call, in every tone and accent. "There is Romain! Good-morning, Romain! Hello, Romain, hello!" which for a moment gave the lock-keeper, standing on the platform in a blaze of excitement, the paralyzing intoxication of popularity.

"Eh! *bon Dieu!* What do they mean, my poor man?" exclaimed Sylvanire in terror, jumping from the car before any of the others, little Fanny in her arms.

"They are happy, and are amusing themselves,—but, bless' pig! I have more reason than they to be happy."

And, hoisting himself to his wife's rosy cheeks, he made them smack with a loud kiss that redoubled the shouts of laughter inside the curtains; then darted off to the assistance of Mme. Ebsen and her daughter. But Lorie, who was in the coach, had already anticipated him, and had helped the ladies from the car, with the respectfully humble manner with which he had formerly received the Empress Eugénie when she had landed at the quay at Cherchell.

"And Maurice?" asked Fanny, looking for her brother beside Romain.

"Monsieur Maurice is at the lock, Mamzelle. I left him with Baraquin to help work it. This way out, monsieur, mesdames. . . ."

Laden with everybody's coats and umbrellas, the lock-keeper, in a brisk little trot, in which he was evidently restraining his desire to run and jump, hurried toward the gateway, while the train, to the cry of a thousand mischievous voices calling: "Romain! Hello, Romain!" moved away, tossing behind it as it went great puffs of smoke.

It had been Sylvanire's idea, seeing the dull, mournful countenance of the *Borda* pupil always poring over his books, to send him for a little diversion into the pure air of the country. Lorie had consented all the more readily to this plan, because with his utilitarian views of life, he saw in this an opportunity for the young man to continue his studies from the practical side. Maurice had been at the lock three weeks, when his friends,

profiting by a holiday, when there would be neither lessons nor work at the Department, had made up a party to come and see him. How proud was Romain to receive his former Prefect, and these two handsome ladies! What joy to extend to Sylvanire the honors of that conjugal dwelling where soon, perhaps — but hush! This was a secret between the two.

From Ablon to Petit-Port was scarcely more than three kilometers, an omnibus running between the two for every train; but the lock-keeper, thinking it would be more pleasant, had brought his boat, a large green one, freshly repainted. Here all the guests were soon installed, the little girl in the stern between Éline and Mme. Ebsen, and Lorie on the seat in front of them. Sylvanire sat in the bow, which she completely filled with her dress — of that shade of blue worn by nurses, and which, with her white fluted cap, seemed like a livery. Romain, active as a rat, was the last to jump in, shoving off the boat with his foot, and taking up the oars. The boat was heavy, and the current strong.

"You will fatigue yourself, my good man."

"No fear of that, Monsieur Lorie." And the little man, bracing himself firmly against the foot-rest, gurgled and grimaced in the sunshine, bending his curly head backward until it almost touched his wife's knees; then, by a singular manœuvre, pushing out into the middle of the river where the current was very swift.

"Petit-Port is then on the other side, Romain?"

"Beg pardon, Monsieur Lorie, but it is only to connect with the Chain."

No one understood what he meant until they saw him suddenly lay down his oars, and with the end of his boat-hook grasp the last of a long train of tows that passed every morning at that hour. Certainly a delicious mode of navigation, no fatigue, no jar. The throbbing of the engine, and the grating of the tow-chain on the bridge were distinguished only in the distance, as a monotonous, soothing murmur, that seemed to spread to the two river banks with the foam in their wake. Under the bright sky, glorified by the youth of the day and the season, the country deserted, pretty white houses, on both sides of the river, in their gardens of budding vegetation, with their half-blown lilacs nodding in the fresh breeze, unfolded themselves to view.

"How comfortable we are!" said Fanny, her arm around Éline; and that little childish voice expressed the sentiments of the whole party. They were comfortable. For the first time since their sorrow, the young girl's cheek glowed with the tinge of health, and her sweet smile, like a half-opened flower, expressed delight in the presence of nature — of nature, always soothing, always comforting. Mme. Ebsen, like all persons who have lived long and suffered much, enjoyed more quietly her day of relaxation. Lorie watched the blond hair on Éline's brow and neck flutter gently in the breeze, and fancied that, somehow, it was his own heart that his little girl's arm drew close to the

young girl's heart. But the happiest of them all was Romain, as he sat in the bow near his wife, speaking to her in low tones, and from time to time stealing sly glances behind him.

"There's Petit-Port," he suddenly exclaimed, pointing to a village, with its uniform red roofs scattered over the slopes, as yet somewhat bare, on which were planted the market gardens, vegetable patches, and flower beds, that border the left bank of the Seine above Ablon.

"In a quarter of an hour we shall be at the lock."

Along the bank an estate of ancient and manorial appearance spread for a considerable distance its balustraded roofs, its rows of gray shutters, its thick well-pruned hedges and lawn, in the form of a half-moon, inclosed with huge stones, connected by chains in front of the entrance door. Beyond, extended over the hill an immense park, with its great trees of many different species, through which could be discovered, detached and overgrown with moss, an old stone stairway, its double balustrade meeting overhead in an arch. As the foliage was yet scant, they also saw overlooking a white building, a massive, evidently new, marble cross, which they took for a great family tomb, or a chapel.

"The Autheman Château," responded Romain, in answer to their questioning glances.

"Why, then, this is Port-Sauveur," exclaimed Éline quickly.

"Precisely, Mamzelle. That's what they call

the Château here in the country. And a queer place it is too, and their village as well! You would have to search far through Seine-et-Oise, and even through all France to find its like."

An inexplicable feeling of uneasiness suddenly seized the young girl, dimming the beautiful spring sunshine, and the pure atmosphere, full of the perfume of violets. It was the memory of her visit to the Rue Pavée, and the reproaches of Mme. Autheman on her Grandmother's impenitent death. She could not turn her eyes from those rows of closed shutters, from that dark, mysterious park, dominated by the funereal cross. What chance was leading her here? Was it indeed chance, or was it, perhaps, a higher will, a warning from God?

But, already, a turn in the bank, a cluster of trees, the progress of the boat, bringing into view all that part of the estate that lay on and beyond the hill, had removed the ghostly spell. They could now perceive the lock intersecting the river, with its silver foam. They heard its dull roar, becoming louder as they approached the flood-gates of the weir. At a signal from the tug, the little white jetty of the mill-race was slowly opening its gates. Romain showed Sylvanire a tiny house on the tow-path, a mere die of a house, the black spots well represented by the doors and windows.

"At home!" he exclaimed in a whisper, with tears in his eyes, as he detached his boat from the tow, and guided it to the landing. Maurice,

busy on the jetty with the boy, had seen them from a distance, and came running toward them, shouting like a Caribbean savage, waving in the air his cap, the gilt cords of which were sadly tarnished by the water and sun. He himself, tanned, sunburnt, his nose red and swollen, a real sailor, as Romain said, had been wonderfully benefited by his out-of-door exercise.

"Eh Maurice! the *Borda!*" cried the father cheerily, without seeing the poor child's terrified expression at this sudden mention of his vocation. Fortunately for him, they now arrived at the lock-keeper's dwelling, a one-storied cottage raised a few feet above the ground as a protection from high tides, and surrounded by a vegetable garden, its green furrows in perfect order. Inside the house was a large room containing two single beds for the lock-keeper and his boy. In one corner were a wooden dial, needle, manipulator, and the telegraphic apparatus connecting the lock with all the others along the Seine. On one side, was the kitchen, full of shining utensils that had never been used.

"You see," explained Romain, "that as long as I am a bachelor," and he went on to tell that he ate his meals at the Affameur, kept by Damour, a boatman's tavern near by, celebrated for its vegetable soup and fried tench. It was there that he had ordered breakfast for the party.

He then opened the door of a room facing the kitchen, into which he proudly and mysteriously introduced his guests. The shutters were closed,

but when Romain opened the windows, and the light came streaming in, there were exclamations of surprise. There was a beautiful mahogany bed, a pretty carpet covered with large roses, a bureau surmounted by a mirror which reflected a variety of trinkets gotten at the Fair. The buff wall-paper was decorated with pictures that he had cut from magazines. It was a surprise, this room! Sylvanire's room, furnished entirely from the lock-keeper's savings, and without saying a word to his wife. He was keeping it as a gift for her until the time when . . .

"It is very nice," exclaimed Sylvanire, fearing that he was saying too much; and she drew him outside, leaving the ladies before the new mirror to rearrange their hats, slightly disordered by the fresh breeze of the river. Alone with Eline and her mother, little Fanny, in a mysterious tone, said:

"I know very well why Romain is so happy. It is because they are going to live together soon, as soon as we have a new Mamma."

Éline started:

"A new Mamma! Who has spoken to you of such a thing?"

"Sylvanire did, this morning, as she was dressing me. But hush! It is a great secret."

And she ran away to join her brother, who was calling her.

The two women looked at each other.

"A great mystery," said Mme. Ebsen, smiling.

Éline was indignant:

"How ridiculous! To marry at his age." And

her hand trembled nervously as she adjusted the long jet pin in her hair.

"Why, Linette, M. Lorie is not old at all. Hardly forty, and he does not even seem so old as that. And so fine-looking, so distinguished."

Forty years old. Éline would have supposed him much older. It was doubtless his serious look, his solemn manner, that made him appear so old to her eyes. The sudden announcement of his marriage was of no interest to her except so far as Fanny was concerned, for she had grown accustomed to treat the child as her own, and, of course, that woman would take her away. But, what woman? Lorie had never spoken of any one. He did not go out, he saw no one.

"We must get him to talk," said the mother. "We have the whole day for it."

When they joined the others on the little jetty, Romain was explaining to M. Lorie the system of the locks, the flood-gates raised or lowered, by the aid of a lever, the iron braces in the stonework, by which he descended into the water, dressed in a diving costume, to repair the gates of the dam. A famous invention, bless' pig, these locks! Formerly, during three months of summer, the poor boatmen were compelled to be idle, and, in river lauguage, this lost time, when the women and children cried with hunger, and the men solaced their empty stomachs at the tavern, was called the *affameur;* hence the name of the neighboring inn. But now, the water flowed all the year, and work with . . .

Lorie followed the explanation in the grave, understanding manner of a Sub-Prefect inspecting the works of his department. Éline was not listening, for she was thinking of the child who had come into her life just at the right time to fill its emptiness and satisfy that maternal instinct which was beginning to stir within her. For Fanny she had all the feelings of a mother, the indefatigable patience, the anxieties, the concern for her comfort, occupied not only in her studies, but in the cut of her little frocks, the color of her hat, and the shade of the ribbon with which her hair was tied. She had entire charge of these details, Sylvanire having abdicated in favor of her taste and grace. And now . . .

The whistle on the Chain sounded loud and shrill. Their meal finished, the boatmen hurried back to the river, and soon the tug, with smoke puffing from its black and white smoke-stack, its red sides almost touching the two boats or the mill-pond, filed slowly out, followed by all its train of boats. The gates of the lock slowly closed, driving back an immense mass of water, and the grating and creaking of the Chain grew more and more indistinct as it glided away, with its wave-like motion, becoming smaller and smaller to the last little boat, like the tail of a kite. Before leaving the jetty, the lock-keeper introduced Baraquin, the one whom he called his boy, a somewhat youthful name for the tanned, chapped face of this wrinkled old Seine-et-Oise boatman, twisted from rheumatism, and walking sideways, like a crab.

The old fellow grunted a few words of welcome which seemed to come from the bottom of his boots. Nobody paid much attention to him.

Romain — and it was the distinguishing feature of the old sailor — never drank a drop of wine or brandy. As a young man, he had been, however, as he proudly said, "the greatest toper in the fleet," but, having struck the captain one day when he was tipsy, and risked a court-martial, with all its consequences, he took an oath never to drink another drop, and kept his word, in spite of the jokes and wagers of his crew, and the temptations laid for him. Now, the mere sight of a glass of wine turned his stomach; on the other hand, he had taken a fancy for sweet things, such as *café au lait*, milk-posset, and almond syrup. It was certainly not a piece of luck for him to have fallen on a companion who was always half seas over.

"But what can you expect?" said the lock-keeper, as he conducted his guests to breakfast. "It's not this poor old fellow's fault. It is the Château that is to blame. Ever since they have *conjured* him, he always has more money than he knows what to do with."

"*Conjured* him? What do you mean?"

"Yes, indeed. Every time he goes to church and takes the communion, the lady of Petit-Port gives him forty francs and a coat. That is what is ruining him, the poor boy."

The inn of L'Affameur, situated a little above the lock, may be seen from a distance perched on a

terrace with latticed arbors at each corner. On the terrace they have all kinds of open air amusements, shooting at cakes, quoits, bowling, swings, and on a green platform are trapezes and knotted ropes. Greeted, on entering the house, by the fragrant odor of the soup, made every day for the Chain, the guests found the hostess, Mme. Damour, about to lay their table in a little private room, with plastered walls, but as neat as a pin. The hostess, also the perfection of tidiness, with a serious, almost a harsh face, brightened up only when she saw Romain, "her favorite boarder."

As she bustled in and out, Romain, in a low tone, explained that in their time no people had been livelier than these Damours; but they had lost a daughter, a tall, handsome young lady about Mlle. Éline's age. In his grief, the husband had begun to drink, and grew worse and worse, until he had ended in the madhouse at Vaucluse; and the wife, now left all alone, had no heart to laugh, bless' pig!

"And of what did this poor young girl die?" asked Mme. Ebsen, gazing tremblingly on her nineteen-year-old daughter, sweet and delicate as a flower.

"It would seem," Romain went on, still more mysteriously, "that the lady of Petit-Port gave her something bad to drink."

And, at a movement of indignation from the young girl:

"Listen, then! I am only telling you what the mother says. This much is certain, that the child died at the Château, and that the people in the

country around about have not done talking of it yet, although it happened years ago."

The hostess came in, bringing on a saucepan still glowing from the fire a magnificent tench, caught by Romain within the regulation reserve of two hundred meters above and below the lock; and the scent of this rustic dish, the lock-keeper's explanations, and their fine appetites gained from the trip on the river, proved a diversion from this gloomy local story, which was all the more quickly dissipated in the refreshing breeze that blew in from the Seine, ruffling the river before the terrace in a thousand silvery scales, whose sparkling motion was mirrored in dancing reflections on the glasses, the carafes, and the coarse, unbleached table-cloth. A bottle of Burgundy, a wine which the boatmen offer in payment for their meals at riverside inns, increased the merriment of the feast, already gay with the laughter of the children, and the extravagant joy of Romain, seated by Sylvanire at a small table by the window.

How happy he was, the excellent little lock-keeper, to be at breakfast with his wife, the first time, perhaps, in two years, since their marriage; a real return of their wedding day. But his happiness did not prevent him from looking after the welfare of his guests, and from running in and out from the kitchen to the table to see that nothing was lacking; and the favorite boarder even insisted on making the coffee with his own hands, in the Algerian fashion, as his former master used to like it, with all the coffee grounds in the bottom of the

cup. Triumphantly he was placing the tray on a long table used as a sideboard, when a sound was suddenly heard from the table under the linen cover.

"Listen! a piano."

It was, in fact, an old harpsichord, bought at the sale of one of those old châteaux still remaining on that bank of the Seine. After having led many a gavotte and *menuet à panier*, the old-fashioned instrument now served to amuse Parisians on Sunday at a public-house, wearing out its old age for *L'Amant d'Amanda*, or *La Fille de l'Emballeur*. But under the delicate touch of Éline, the thin tones found again a momentary charm, the short melancholy sound of the notes corresponding well with the yellow ivory of the keys.

When the young girl, who had not played on the piano since she had been in mourning, began the *ritornello* of the old national air, *Denmark with fair fields and meadows*, one would have said that Grandmother herself, in her quavering and broken voice, was calling up on the distant horizon a picture of the green pastures, the waving wheat-fields, of nature generous and radiant.

Then Éline played something from Mozart which sounded like a warbling of birds shut up in the little piano, to which the wagtails and fauvettes responded, living warblers hopping about in the reeds of the bank. The sonata finished, she played another, and still another, abandoning herself to the charm of the old instrument, when, upon turning round, she saw that she was alone

with Lorie. Romain and Sylvanire had gone down to the river bank to amuse the children, and Mme. Ebsen had followed to weep the more freely.

He had remained there, continuing to listen, and moved to the depths of his heart, much more than was befitting in a member of the administration. She was so pretty, animated as she was by the music, her eyes sparkling, her fingers hovering delicately like fluttering butterflies, over the keys. He would have liked to prolong that delicious moment, and to remain thus forever, gazing on her. Suddenly a child's cry, a distracting cry of terror, broke in on the encircling calm of the air, the sonorous murmur of the water.

"It is Fanny," cried Éline, pale as death, rushing to the window. But now, there were shouts of laughter, and Lorie, leaning out of the window, discovered the cause of all the excitement. Romain, dressed in his diving-dress, was getting ready to descend under the lock.

"How frightened I was!"

Éline, whose color had returned with the regular beating of her heart, for a moment interrupted, leaned upon the little balcony, one hand over her eyes, blushing and wreathed in light.

"How good you are to that child!" murmured Lorie.

"It is true that I love her as if she were mine, and the thought of giving her up causes me much sorrow."

He was dismayed, thinking of those marriage

plans of which Mme. Ebsen had already spoken, and, timidly, fearing to learn more:

"Give her up? And why?"

She hesitated a little, still looking in the distance.

"Because you are going to give her a new mother."

"Who told you that? I have never thought of such a thing."

But who could resist those transparent eyes, meeting his? Yes, of course he had sometimes thought . . . It is so dreary to live alone, to have no one in whom he can confide his daily pleasures and troubles. . . . So gloomy to have a home and no wife. Sylvanire would leave them some day or other, and, anyway, she did not take a mother's place with the children. As for him, he was bound to confess that in spite of his talents as an organizer, and while he was perfectly competent to manage the entire province of Algiers, he scarcely understood how to keep house.

He said all this simply, with some confusion, a kind, frank smile lighting up the serious face; and Éline certainly liked him better thus, disconcerted and disarmed before the difficulties of life, than when he was invested with his official solemnity.

"That is why I have sometimes thought of marrying again; but only within my own heart, without having spoken a word to any one. And I wonder who could have told you. . . ."

Éline interrupted him:

"Is she kind, at least — she of whom you have thought?"

And Lorie, all in a tremor:

"Kind, pretty, perfection itself."

"Will she love your children?"

"She already loves them."

She understood, and was speechless.

He took her hand, and began to speak very low, and without knowing exactly what he was saying; but she could distinguish in his agitation the tremor and music of love. And while these tender protestations and promises for the future poured from her lover's lips, Éline, still pensive, and gazing toward the distant horizon, thought she could see her own life unfold, as smooth and tranquil as this landscape by the Seine, with the furrows traced in even lines, and the grain, as yet scarcely sprouted, touched by sunshine and shadow, according to the caprice of the sky. Perhaps she had dreamed of a broader, a more active existence. In youth, one always longs for obstacles to overcome, for dangerous forests like that through which Red Riding-Hood passed, for the swinging tower to which the bluebird flies. But this marriage which was offered, would make no change in her family relations. She would keep Fanny, she would not be obliged to leave her mother.

"Oh! never. I promise you that, Éline."

"Then I agree. I will be the mother to your children."

Without knowing exactly how it had happened,

they now found themselves united, united in one moment for all life; and Mme. Ebsen, appearing on the terrace, guessed all, seeing them hand in hand leaning against the window as they watched their little ones.

VII.

PORT-SAUVEUR.

Of all the villages scattered along the left bank of the Seine between Paris and Corbeil, pretty rural places these, with sunny names — Orangis, Ris, Athis-Mons — Petit-Port, in spite of its more plebeian name, is the only one that boasts a past, a history. Like Ablon and Charenton, at the close of the sixteenth century it was an important center of Calvinism, being one of those places of meeting granted the Protestants of Paris by the Edict of Nantes. Around the pulpit of the church of Petit-Port assembled every Sunday the most eminent followers of the Reformed Religion, Sully, the Rohans, the Princess of Orange. Their gorgeous, gold-bedecked coaches rolled up and down between the elms of the Pavée du Roi. Famous theologians were heard there. Many wonderful baptisms and marriages were recorded, and the fame of its astonishing adjurations was sounded abroad. But this glory was short-lived.

At the Revocation the Calvinistic population was scattered and the church demolished; and when, in 1832, Samuel Autheman came there to establish his refineries, he found an obscure little village of market gardeners, with no other memory of its past history, now buried in the dust of its

archives, than the name given a doubtful piece of property, an abandoned quarry, which was called "Le Prêche." It was on Le Prêche, the very site of the old church, that the workshops were erected, some little distance above the magnificent estate purchased at the same time by the old gold merchant, who, even at that time, was very rich.

Like the village, the estate was full of historical associations, having once belonged to Gabrielle d'Estrées; but here also there remained no reminiscence of former times except an old stone stairway, rusty from the action of sun and rain, with its double balustrade hidden beneath a dark mass of wild vines and ivy. Gabrielle's Stairs! The very name called up visions of fine lords and ladies, with glimpses of shining satins flashing through the foliage.

Doubtless, many of the trees in the park were contemporaries of the favorite; but trees do not speak, as stones do, they tell nothing of the past, and with every changing season lose their memory with their leaves. All that is known of the ancient château is that it stood on an elevation that overlooked the estate, and that the servants' quarters were on the river bank, on the spot where the modern dwelling stands to-day, restored and enlarged by the Authemans.

Unfortunately, a few years after their installation, they, like all owners of riverside property between Paris and Corbeil, had to submit to the passage of a railway, which, all along the Seine, has cut through so much fine old property.

The Orléans road passed across the lawn exactly before the entrance of the house, separating it from the flower-beds, and cutting down two of the four magnificent paulonia trees that shaded the parterre. Slender iron bridges united the divisions made by the railway. And, at all hours of the day, through this splendid property, open at both ends, trains rushed by, with an iron roar, leaving behind a long trail of black smoke; and the passengers, looking from their small windows, saw a picture of a terrace, bordered with blooming orange trees where the Autheman family, seated in American chairs, enjoyed the fresh air; farther away, stables of red brick, conservatories, and a kitchen-garden, divided into two strips by the railway, like the garden of a railroad officer.

When, at the death of her mother-in-law, Jeanne Autheman found herself mistress of the fortune and will of her husband, she still lingered at Port-Sauveur, attracted by its Calvinistic associations, — a predestination, perhaps, of her future destiny. She transformed the country-house, as she had done the *hôtel* in Paris, rebuilt the old church, and established schools for boys and girls. As the workmen of the refinery had all followed Uncle Becker to the works at Romainville, there remained at Petit-Port only a small population consisting of market-gardeners, peasants, and a few small tradesmen. It was among the latter that Jeanne, assisted by Anne de Beuil, exercised her proselyting zeal. The old maid went from door to door, promising the custom and protection of

the château to all who would come to church and would send their children to the Evangelical schools, which, with the trade schools attached, were free, and upon leaving which, pupils would find positions suited to their proclivities.

One must, indeed, have had very firm religious convictions, such as our peasants rarely possess, to resist such advantages as these. A few children came at first; then their parents fell into the habit of accompanying them to meeting on Sundays. Mme. Autheman, after officiating herself for some time at "family worship," as she called it, engaged a pastor from Corbeil, an aged, timid man, who administered the sacrament and officiated at weddings and funerals, but who was never more than a subordinate. Jeanne, very authoritative, retained the supreme control of her church and schools. When at the end of a few years this old man died, she had much difficulty in replacing him, notwithstanding her immense fortune, and her influence among the Parisian clergy. Pastors succeeded one another at Petit-Port, but all quickly tired of the rôle of "reader" or of sacristan to which they were reduced, until the day when Jeanne met M. Birk, of the Scandinavian Church, a man thoroughly mercenary, and ready for anything that might turn up, knowing just enough French to read the Bible and perform the sacraments.

Jeanne reserved to herself the preaching and interpretation of Scripture; and the astonishment of the peasants may be imagined when they saw the lady of the château ascend into the pulpit. She certainly

spoke very well indeed, and was as long-winded as the most prosy curate. Besides, there was this handsome new meeting-house, much larger than their church, with the severe simplicity of its high, bare walls, and the authority of the banker's name and fortune! They went away bewildered and impressed, related what they had seen, and how young Mme. Autheman had "said mass." After service the *châtelaine* remained in the vestry, to meet those who wished to speak with her, encouraging them to confide their business affairs to her, and advising them, not in the mystic language of the pulpit, but familiarly, with practical common sense.

It was in this way, also, that she established a prize of money and clothing, to be awarded on Communion day, to all who would accept the Reformed Religion. The mail-carrier was the first, then the road-laborer and his wife. Their "reception" took place with great ceremony; and when the villagers saw them dressed in warm, new woollen clothing, with shining silver coins rattling in their pockets, and the protection of the château henceforth assured, many others were induced to follow their example.

To resist this unrestrained propaganda, there were at Petit-Port only the Curé and the Sister. The Curé — poor, saintly man — was with much difficulty supported by his parish, from which no perquisites ever came, and added a trifle to his meagre income by the proceeds of his fishing, which his servant sold secretly at the inns of Ablon.

Accustomed, moreover, in the village to respect the wealthy proprietor, with his superior influence, it was not he who would have dared to oppose the Authemans. He allowed himself, it is true, a few veiled allusions from the pulpit on Sunday, and addressed statement after statement to the Bishopric of Versailles, but that did not prevent his church from becoming as empty as a cracked vase from which the water slowly escapes, and the ranks of the catechism class from growing thinner year by year, leaving plenty of room for splendid games of hide-and-seek between the benches for the few urchins who still attended.

More ardent, as women always are when influenced by their feelings, Sister Octavia, the director of the Girls' School, made the Curé ashamed of his helplessness, and placed herself in open antagonism to the château. She bustled about,—for she also had an abundance of leisure now,— running up and down the village, her *coiffe* flapping, her long rosary rattling at her side, trying to win back her pupils, as they came out of the Evangelical School.

"Are you not ashamed of yourselves, you impudent little things?"

She assailed the mothers at their wash-tubs, the fathers in the field, invoking God, the Virgin Mary, the Saints, and pointing to the mysterious heavens, in which the peasant sees nothing but rain or sunshine for his harvests. They nudged one another, and with many a sly wink and heavy penitential sigh replied:

"Why, yes, Sister, certainly. . . . It would be much better, as you say."

It was terrible when she and Anne de Beuil met face to face. The two women were prototypes of the two religions, — the one thin, pinched, sallow, disclosing a history, in spite of the years that had elapsed, of revolt and persecutions; the other plump and amiable, with cheeks falling over her bib, and dimpled hands, in the full assurance of her *guimpe*, usually a protection against the rich. Only, in this instance, the whole château made war against the Sister, and the contest was unequal.

In her excitement, Sister Octavia did not mince her words, and, not content to ridicule Mme. Autheman and her preaching, brought against her the gravest accusations, such as the abduction of children, the use of all kinds of violence, and even drugs and witchcraft, to force them to abjure their religion. The inexplicable and sudden death of a young girl, Félicie Damour, who was employed at the château, gave much credence to these stories. They even went so far as to begin an inquest, which ended suddenly when Sister Octavia was sent to another place of residence. She was not replaced.

The Curé kept his post, and lived on in his corner, preaching to empty benches, and remaining even on good terms with the Authemans, who in the hunting season sent him presents of game.

"These people are too strong. They must be handled carefully," the Bishop had said; and thus relieved by his superior from all responsibility, the

good Curé continued to fish for *chevennes*, and took things as they came.

From this time the village presented a singular appearance. Between the red-roofed cottages, all exactly alike, and built by old Autheman for his workmen, and along the straight avenues of dwarf elms planted by his daughter-in-law, moved a crowd of children, uniformly dressed in black alpaca pinafores, conducted by an instructor in a long frock-coat, or by young girls wearing a dress and cape similar to the one affected by Anne de Beuil. All the people of the château wore black, also, relieved by the letters P. S. in gilt on the coat collar. A stranger would have thought it one of those villages of the Moravian Brothers, Herrnhout or Nieski, — a sort of free community, of a most curious organization; but the devotion of these semi-monks is sincere, while the peasants of Petit-Port are abominable hypocrites. They are perfectly aware that account is taken of their grimaces, their contrite attitudes, bent under the weight of original sin, and of the Biblical phrases which they jumble into their rustic jargon.

Oh, that Bible! The air of all the country is saturated with it. The walls sweat with verses; they ooze from the pediments of the church, from the schools, from the houses of all the château tradespeople. The butcher's shop bears in huge, black letters above the stall: "*Die here that you may live hereafter;*" and the grocer has on the walls of his shop: "*Set your affections on things above.*" Now, the things that are exactly above are bottles

of plums and brandy-cherries. But the peasants do not dare to touch them, for fear of Anne de Beuil and her police; and when they wish to indulge in a little spree, they go to Athis, or to Damour's, at the Affameur. Besides, they are thieves and liars, idlers and profligates, true Seine-et-Oise peasants.

What distinguishes Petit-Port, that village of the Reformation, so strangely sprung from its ashes of three hundred years ago, from other Protestant establishments within the limits of Paris,— from the schools of Versailles, for instance, or from Jouy-en-Josas, from the agricultural colony of Essonne, or from Plessis-Mornay,— is that instead of being supported by the collections of all the Reformed churches of France, England, and America, it is maintained entirely by the Authemans, whose possession and property it is, and who can withdraw it from all other control.

Jeanne Autheman is the pontiff-in-chief, the occult influence behind the activity of Anne de Beuil. During the eight months of her sojourn there, she is scarcely ever seen beyond the limits of her own estate. In the morning she conducts the voluminous correspondence necessitated by the work of the Evangelist Dames,— *The Work*, as she and her followers call it,— and receives neophytes. In the afternoon she shuts herself up in the "Retreat," that isolated pavilion hidden in the heart of the park, the object of so much mysterious gossip. Sunday she spends entirely in the schools and at the lugubrious white temple, whose heavy funereal cross overlooks and oppresses the estate,

and imparts to it its conventual aspect. This appearance is enhanced by the severe and exquisite orderliness everywhere apparent, the neatness of the deserted avenues, the air of religious solemnity that pervades the house, with every front window tightly closed, the shadow of a black cape outlined on the gravel of the avenue or the flagstones of the balcony. The distant strains of the hymns and the organ are the only sounds that break the silent torpor of the long summer afternoons.

Towards evening the house becomes a little more animated. The gates are thrown wide open, wheels grind over the gravel, and a large Scotch collie, aged and feeble, drags itself out to bark around a carriage. It is Autheman, returning from Paris in his coupé, preferring to waste an hour on the way rather than expose his dreary visage to the curiosity of a suburban railway-station, always swarming with people at five o'clock in the afternoon. There is a moment's confusion, doors open and close, a few words are exchanged in a low voice, a bucket is removed from beside the stable, the whistle of the groom is heard as he waters and feeds his horses; then the whole place resumes its mournful silence, broken only at intervals by the smoke and shriek of an express train.

But on this morning, a fresh, beautiful morning in May, the château presented an appearance of unusual activity. Hail had fallen in the night during a terrible storm, cutting down branches and strip-

ping trees of their young foliage, and now the débris, with the tender buds and flowers torn and lacerated, were scattered over the lawn, mixed with bits of glass from the hot-houses. The gardeners were busy with their rakes and wheelbarrows, amidst the noise of dragging branches, gravel, and broken glass.

Gloved, and with his hat on, Autheman, always one of the first to rise at the château, as he was one of the first to arrive at his bank, strode up and down the terrace with feverish step, absorbed in thought, and displaying an agitation that might easily have been attributed to the destruction of his handsome hedges and magnificent potted plants. Every time he reached the front steps, he stopped short, and returned mechanically, sometimes glancing toward the closed window-shutters of his wife's room, and inquiring of a servant if Madame were not yet up. Then he started again on his walk, tormenting and scratching with his gloved hand, with a nervous gesture habitual to him when preoccupied, the frightful malady under his black bandage. On this transparent, rosy morning he appeared as a phantom; and it was thus that he had affected Éline Ebsen when she saw him for the first time behind his office window, with that same acute, consuming glance, that same bitter, distorted smile on the lips that seemed to ask the same mute and mournful question:

"Hideous, is it not?"

Hideous! It was despair itself, in the midst of these surroundings of luxury, the fixed idea that

had tortured him since his childhood. Marriage and the possession of the woman he loved, had for a time cured him. As if reassured by that pretty arm leaning on his, he appeared everywhere. He was seen at church, on the Bourse, and at the meetings of the Consistory, one of whose most active members he became. He had even allowed himself to be elected mayor of Petit-Port. Then suddenly the old hypochondria returned in a more severe form, rendering him more timid than ever. He withdrew from everything, and shut himself up in his château, behind the blue-curtained window of his office. There was apparently no change in the prosperity and harmony of the household. He was still deeply in love with his wife, yielding to all the extravagant caprices of the *Work:* she gentle, affectionate, and scrupulous —when he went away or returned—to extend her smooth white brow for his caress, and to be informed of the movement and operations of business, for she was a true Lyonnaise, at once business-like and mystical.

She told him everything, the subject of her next sermon, the number of souls saved from sin during the week, of which she kept an account in a huge ledger. Nevertheless there was a cloud between them, a secret rupture, as it were, sometimes apparent in the absent responses of the poor deformed man, or in the fixed, supplicating gaze with which he sought to find, back of the smiling indifference of Jeanne, some sensitive point that he might touch. And, most astonishing in one of

her piety, she never asked him why he had ceased to attend her prayer-meetings and all the other religious services, leaving his place on the bench of the Elders vacant, even on the three great Communion days of the year. She seemed to avoid an explanation, to shun it adroitly, with the double instinct of woman and priest, while he was silent from pride, and from the fear of seeing a shadow darken that lovely face, the one light of his life.

But, this time, Autheman had made up his mind to have it out, to say the words that for three years had been stifling him; and he waited therefore, pacing up and down the flagstones, or leaning over the balustrade to watch the passing trains.

The morning express!

It was heralded by a distant trembling of the earth, and a suction which blew away from the straight, deserted track the broken flowers and green branches, stripped from the trees during the storm of the previous evening. Before the paulonias there was a lovely bed of spring flowers, on which he would have liked to throw himself. Oh! it had been the dream of his youth, to sleep on that spot, his cheek on the rail, — that horrible cheek that nothing could cure. And now again, as he leaned far over the balustrade, he was seized with a vertigo, a supreme temptation. But the train had already disappeared in a tornado, with a bellow and a whistle, a lightning flash from its copper engine, and all its little windows looking like a single long one, in a whirlwind of dust, sparks, and frolicsome leaves, carried at full speed by the

wind in its course. Afterward there was a torpor in the air, as if all nature were arrested, while to the right and the left on the spotless road unfolded the shining black rails, seeming smaller and narrower as they receded.

"Madame awaits Monsieur in the small *salon*."

"I am coming," answered Autheman, in the voice of a man who had been awaked, all pale and terrified, from a horrible nightmare.

In a small *salon* on the ground floor, whose old-fashioned green satin furniture dated from the marriage of old Mother Autheman, Jeanne was in close conference with Anne de Beuil, while at the same time breakfasting on a large bowl of cold milk that stood on a corner of the table, crowded with books and papers.

"Remain," she whispered to her acolyte, who upon the entrance of Autheman had started to leave the room; and Jeanne, lifting her limpid eyes to her husband's face, greeted him with:

"Good morning! What a terrible storm we had last night!"

"Terrible indeed. I was afraid you would be alarmed. I wanted to reassure you, but the door of your room was locked — as usual," he added sadly, in a lower voice.

She did not hear him, and continued the conversation, which his entrance had interrupted, dipping bits of bread into her milk.

"Are you sure of that, Anne?"

"Unless Birk has lied," replied Anne de Beuil, in her coarse voice. "Only, the marriage will not

take place for three months on account of their mourning."

"Three months! Oh! in that case we shall save her."

And turning toward Autheman, who was evidently irritated by the presence of a third person:

"I beg your pardon, my dear; but it concerns the saving of a soul, Éline Ebsen, that young girl of whom I told you."

Much cared he at that moment about Éline Ebsen.

"Jeanne!" he exclaimed in a low tone, with a pleading look, but it was evident to him that she did not intend to hear; then suddenly: "Well, good-bye. I am going . . ."

With a single gesture of her slender hand, she stopped him short, as if by a bridle.

"Wait, I have a commission to give you. Is Watson ready?" she asked, turning to Anne de Beuil.

"She sulks still, but she will go."

Then she wrote on a sheet of paper on which was stamped the name of the *Work*, a note which she read aloud.

MY DEAR CHILD, — Next Wednesday Mistress Watson will make her public testimony to the Gospel. We expect to have a most profitable meeting on that occasion, in Hall B, 59 Avenue des Ternes. I count on seeing you there.

Affectionately,

Yours in Christ, ——

Then she signed her name, and gave the letter to her husband, with the request to have it delivered that very morning. She also gave him several other commissions, — proofs for the printer, an order for three hundred Bibles and as many copies of *Daily Bread* the tuner to be sent to Hall B to tune the harmonium — was there anything more? No, that was all.

On the threshold he turned with a look of regret for his lost interview. He wished to speak, but dared not trust himself again, and hurried away furiously, slamming the doors behind him.

"What is the matter with him?" inquired Anne de Beuil.

Jeanne shrugged her shoulders:

"The same thing always." She added: "I wish you would tell Jégu to put another bolt on my door. The one on it does not hold."

"Last night's storm, no doubt," said Anne de Beuil. "The whole house rattled."

And they looked at each other, their faces cold and impassive.

VIII.

WATSON'S TESTIMONY.

BESIDE an omnibus station on the Avenue des Ternes, Mme. Ebsen and her daughter alighted and stepped out into the night. They turned aside into an artisan's court, on which a large glass tranparency, bearing the words *Evangelical Hall*, threw a vague reddish light, like that which flickers in a policeman's lantern. At the entrance of the hall, before a double door of green cloth, a man was distributing little books, tracts, and hymns, to which he added the program of the evening's meeting, which had already begun when the ladies arrived.

The room was large and lofty, — a workshop, which had been recently transformed into a prayer-meeting hall, — and on the whitewashed walls and ceiling, from which fell an occasional crude light from a gas jet, there remained the dark outlines of the furnace chimney, and the holes made by the rack for the implements. Within the room were about forty benches, scarcely half of which were occupied. It was a most ill-assorted assemblage, composed of a few well-dressed old women, several strangers, a number of clerks from the Autheman bank, curiosity seekers, and loungers of the neigh-

borhood, who found it more economical to drowse on a bench in that place than in the café. There were, besides, several workman's blouses, a considerable number of street-sweepers, from which trade, more than any other, the Lutherans in Paris recruit their numbers, five or six soldiers, with closely cropped hair and scarlet ears; and, finally, a few tattered old churchyard beggars, paid so much an hour, with vinous faces, terrible and brutish, and among them a wretchedly poor woman, with a crowd of silent ragged children clinging to her, eating a crust of bread.

On the platform stood Anne de Beuil, tall and lank, keeping time with a black wooden baton to the measure of a hymn. Erect and cold, as usual, Mme. Autheman sat enthroned in a large armchair, in front of a double row of Evangelical pelerines and alpaca pinafores from the schools of Port-Sauveur, each one holding a paper containing the hymns of the evening, which made a white fluttering spot against all that background of black. Éline, seated in the back of the room, beside her mother, mechanically opened her program, handsomely printed on fine paper, and containing the following:

MEETING OF THE EVANGELIST DAMES.

HALL B, 59 AVENUE DES TERNES.

HYMN IV. The precious blood of Jesus
Washes me white as snow.

2d. Address. *The indolence of the Soul.*

BY MME. J. AUTHEMAN.

3d. Testimony of young Nicolas, from the schools of Port-Sauveur.

4th. Testimony of Watson of Cardiff: *A night in tears.*

5th. Hymn XI. Sinners, flee from folly;
Turn your steps toward Canaan.

She had just finished deciphering this jargon, when some one came and invited her and her mother to come up to the front seat. This was extremely flattering to Mme. Ebsen's vanity, and she was very proud to find herself among the plumes of the old ladies whose carriages she had seen before the door, in a line with the President's and the omnibus from Port-Sauveur. This poor woman had a great weakness for titles and wealth; and she sat up straight in her place, spreading herself in her silk mantle, and casting little smiles to the right and left, with the benign air of a boarding-school mistress at a distribution of prizes. Éline sheltered herself against her mother, embarrassed to find herself so conspicuously seated under the very eye of the President.

The music had just ceased abruptly, as all their hymns closed. There was a shuffling of feet, and those little coughs always heard in an audience settling itself to listen. Mme. Autheman advanced to the edge of the platform, her black hair smoothly arranged under a hat of first-class make, — for Saint Paul forbids women from praying or preaching with uncovered heads, — and began to speak of the decline of faith, of the universal indolence of

the soul. No more Christians among men and women of the present day! . . . No more struggling, no more suffering, no more dying for Christ. They think they have done their duty toward him by a few routine observances, by prayers mumbled from the lips, by a few easy sacrifices that cost nothing to their selfish affections.

Éline recognized in the depths of her soul that voice which had once before so stirred her. It was cold, but penetrating as sharp icicles.

"Her words are meant for me," she thought, and she was vexed with herself for coming, knowing the dominating influence exercised over her mind by that other woman-mind.

"No; Jesus does not want any of this lip service, any of this perfunctory Christianity. What he demands is a complete renunciation of the splendors, the comforts, and the affections of the world."

Outside, carriages rolled by, mingling their din with that of omnibus bells, tramway horns, and the dull squeaking cadences of an Auvergnats bagpipe. But the clamors of that Babel and its faubourgs did not reach the ears of the Evangelist. They troubled her no more than the mouse-like nibbling of the poor little gamins gnawing their crusts in the back of the hall, or the snores that arose from a few of those indolent souls.

Standing erect and calm, drawing with one hand her pelerine close to her body, with the other holding half-open a little hymn-book, she continued to preach the severing of all human ties and the

abandonment of all earthly good, closing her address with a quotation from the Bible:

"Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left home, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold."

The organ and the hymns began once more, and were refreshing to hear in that atmosphere, where the very air seemed to stand still, after the fatigue of the long, gloomy discourse. One of the soldiers rose and went out. He was bored, and besides the windows were closed, and the room was warm.

"They ought to lower the gas," said stout Mme. Ebsen, in a low voice. And Lina thought she was answering her mother, when she replied quickly, almost irritably:

"Yes, yes, it is in the Bible."

Suddenly, from the platform was heard the squeak of a childish voice, speaking in a plebeian tone, his lips twisted in the manner of a ticket-seller in a theatre. It was young Nicolas, from the schools of Port-Sauveur. Fifteen years old, with hollow checks, sallow complexion, and hair well-oiled and sleek, he rocked backward and forward in his long pinafore, emphasizing each word with the gesture of a street tough.

"Glory to God! I am washed in the blood of Jesus. . . . I used to serve the devil, and my black soul wallowed in iniquity. . . . No, I should never dare to tell you the enormity of my sins."

He stopped a moment for want of breath, and it

seemed as if he were going to recount his sins in detail. Now, as before coming to Port-Sauveur he had passed two years at La Petite-Roquette, the audience would have heard some stiff ones. Fortunately, he passed them over.

"Now all is glory and light in my soul. Jesus has rescued me from the sea of perdition, and he will save you also, if you call to him for aid. Sinners, you who listen to me, resist him no longer . . ."

He addressed his remarks to the old ladies on the front seat, with a knowing smile and cunning winks, as if he were speaking to his former fellow-prisoners; he urged them "to flee from evil society, and to yield themselves to Jesus, whose precious blood will wash away the blackest crimes . . ." Then, rolling his shoulders, with his head thrust forward from the thin, turtle-like neck, he withdrew, to give place to Watson of Cardiff.

When she appeared, a rustle of excitement agitated the hall, as at the entrance of the star actress. She was the attraction of the program, this Watson, and in the President's circle a "testimony" had been long anticipated. Éline recognized beneath the broad brim of an English bonnet, tied with wide ribbons, the swollen, tear-stained face and blood-shot eyes of the apparition that had so alarmed her on the occasion of her visit to Mme. Autheman. This morning, doubtless, she had been made to repeat her "testimony," at the price, Lina could imagine, of much anguish.

"She still sulks, but she will go!" Of course!

She will go; but no, in the presence of all those people, in the glare of that light, with those eyes fixed upon her grief and her ugliness, her voice suddenly failed her. They saw the throbbing of the poor, thin chest, and the two white hands with prominent veins, raised as if to clutch the hissing throat, instinctively seeking the horrid obstacle that was choking her and preventing her from speaking.

"Watson!" exclaimed a voice, sharp and severe.

The catechumen bent her head in that direction, as if to answer that she was going to speak; and so great was the effort she made, that the audience heard in her throat a rattling sound like that of a clock running down.

"A night in tears!" she began, but so low that no one heard her.

"Louder!" commanded the same voice that spoke before.

Then she rushed on without taking breath, and with a frightful English accent:

"I have suffered very much for my belief in Jesus, and I want to tell you of his long-continued patience with me."

At the Palais-Royal this would have evoked wild shouts of laughter. Here they asked one another in astonishment:

"What is she saying?"

On the stage Mme. Autheman and Anne de Beuil whispered to each other. Then the President called out: "Éline Ebsen!" beckoning her

to come forward. The young girl hesitated, and looked at her mother.

"Go!"

She obeyed, as in a dream, and was made to understand that she was wanted to translate, word for word, the testimony that Watson would give in her own language. She, who was paralyzed by the presence of two persons near the piano, to speak there before all those people!

"She will never dare," thought the mother. She did dare, however, and began to translate readily, to follow all the inflections of the catechumen, while Mme. Ebsen, animated by a puerile, maternal vanity, looked proudly about her to judge of the effect produced.

Ah! unhappy mother, it is on her own child that she should rather have gazed, her cheeks aflame with feverish excitement, her eyes, at first cast down beneath their silken lashes, now wide open, brilliant, and staring; and she would have understood that this was the beginning of a nervous attack, the like of which often fills whole rows of hospital beds with patients, and that the demented creature, pale and haggard, standing by Éline's side, touching her with her wild gestures, breathing upon her with her hot breath, was infecting her child with her own contagious madness.

Sinister and violent was this "testimony" of Watson. One day one of her children had been drowned, before her eyes, almost within reach of her arms, and this tragic death had thrown her into a horrible torpor from which nothing could

She did dare, however, and began to translate readily."

arouse her. Then there had come a woman, who said:

"Watson, arise and weep no more. What has happened is the first warning from the Father, a punishment for having given all your heart to earthly affections, for it is written: *Love not.* If this first warning is not sufficient, the Father will send another. He will take your husband and your two remaining children. He will strike you unceasingly until you understand."

Watson asked: "What must I do?"

"Renounce the world and work for the Divine Master. There are millions of souls who from ignorance are serving the devil. Go and deliver them, carry them the salvation of the Gospel. The life of your family will be spared only at that price."

"I will go," said Watson; and, profiting by the absence of her husband, — guardian-in-chief of the lighthouse at Cardiff, and on duty there half of every month, — one night, while her little ones slept, she left her home. Oh, that night of her departure, that last night of watching beside the two little cots, where rested her darlings in innocent, peaceful sleep! The despairing clinging to those little hands, to those little arms outstretched in the abandon of sleep, with the caressing grace of childhood! What farewells were those! How many tears she had shed! They flowed again, even now, as she spoke, from the memory of it all, and poured like devouring lava, down the hollow cheeks of the poor face. But, with God's help,

Watson had triumphed over the snares of the Evil Spirit, and now she is in harmony with Jesus. Happy, oh, so happy, her heart overflowing with joy! Watson of Cardiff is saved. Glory to God in the Highest! Saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ! And, at the command of her superiors, she will go and proclaim the love of Jesus, singing and prophesying, even to the top of the highest mountain.

It was horrible, the contrast between this living despair, with features tear-swollen and convulsed, and this mystic Hosanna, endeavoring to soar away into ecstasy, as she billed and cooed her "delicious, very delicious," — like a poor, wounded bird, with bleeding wings, singing its death song. Her testimony finished, she remained standing in the same spot, unconscious, as if hypnotized, moving her lifeless lips in inaudible prayer.

"Take her away," said Mme. Autheman, while, amidst the uproar of the excited hall, the organ began to play, and the choir to sing:

> Sinners, flee from folly;
> Turn your steps toward Canaan.

Every one, in truth, seemed eager to flee, to escape from that stifling, unnatural atmosphere. On coming into the air everybody drew a long breath; and it seemed strange to see once more the noisy sidewalks, the crowds gathered about the tramways and omnibuses, the avenues filled with carriages rolling toward the Bois this lovely Sunday evening, under the brilliant electric lights that

shone from the Arc de Triomphe, blinding the horses and making the theatre bills and shop signs as legible as if it had been broad daylight.

Greatly delighted by the success of her daughter, and the compliments bestowed on Mme. Autheman for having secured such an intelligent assistant, Mme. Ebsen tried to talk to Éline and to make her voice heard above the jolts of the omnibus and the racket of the wheels on the streets; but the young girl, seated far back in the vehicle, did not utter ten words during the long ride from the Avenue des Ternes to the Luxembourg.

"I declare, Linette, it was wonderful to translate offhand like that. Lorie would have been very proud, if he had heard you. But how warm it was in there! And say, that Watson . . . It was dreadful, all the same . . . what she did . . . to leave her husband and children. . . . Do you believe it possible that God commands people to do such things?"

Her tone expressed all that she thought, but dared not say, of the absurdity, the cruelty of that strange service, and, but for the unresponsive face of Éline, with whom, somehow, she did not feel as much at ease as usual, she would have concluded by saying that "it was all tomfoolery." Instinctively she drew nearer to her, and sought her child's hand, which was cold and heavy.

"What is the matter, dearie? You are chilly. Raise the window."

"No, no, leave it alone," said Éline in a low voice, for the first time in her life irritated by the

talkativeness and affectionate babbling of her mother. Besides, she was annoyed by this omnibus with its Sunday crowd, impatient with the people brushing against her as they got in and out the vehicle, the triviality of their dull, expressionless faces half visible in the gloom. And, leaning her elbow against the window-sill, she tried to isolate herself, and to experience again the emotion she had so recently felt.

But what was the matter with Paris this evening, this Paris in which she had chanced to be born, and which she loved as her own native land? In the heavy atmosphere, foul from ill-smelling gutters, there swarmed crowds of drunken carousers, starved children crying for bread, and slatternly women gossiping on the doorsteps. Farther on, the luxury of the residence quarters, the cafés overflowing with men and women continually moving in and out in the wan light of the gas jets, saddened her still more. It was like a masked ball where the music is not heard, or a whirl of giddy flies, buzzing in the sunshine around the Tree of Death. Oh, what a rich harvest of souls was there! What a joy it would be to give the Saviour all these gleaned from sin! And as this thought returned to her, as it had done awhile ago on the platform, she felt a sweet and overpowering exaltation of soul.

It was raining now, and an equinoctial storm was sweeping the avenue, filling every transfer station and porch with a frightened bedraggled crowd, that resembled drowned ants. Mme. Ebsen was

asleep, soothed by the motion of the omnibus, her kindly face nodding over her bonnet strings. Éline thought of the narrowness and selfishness of their lives. Had she any right to be contemptuous toward others? What more or what better had she done than they? How childish and short-sighted even the good she had attempted! Did not God require something more of her? What if she had wearied him by her indolence and indifference? He had already warned her, as he had warned Watson, by taking away poor Grandmother suddenly, and without giving her time to repent. What if he should strike still closer to her heart. Her mother! What if her mother, too, should die suddenly!

This agonizing thought tortured her through all the night.

The impression of that evening, instead of becoming more dim as the days went by, lost in the busy current of her life, grew and deepened within her, haunting her even during her lessons in those friendly, luxurious homes where she taught English and German to the children whose mothers had been Mme. Ebsen's pupils. In spite of the cordial welcome with which she was received, and the ease and comfort so congenial to her refined tastes, Éline now became wearied at the study table lined with little curly blond heads, rising over broad English collars and jerseys decorated with red anchors. The repeated questions and heedlessness of all those little people interrupted her reveries

and worried her, and she came to the conclusion that, like Henriette Briss, her work was stultifying and beneath her capabilities. And the parents! What coarse, frivolous souls were the men! And the women, what *étagères* for the display of trinkets and ornaments!

The Baroness Gerspach, a good-hearted person, oh dear, yes; but so empty-headed, entirely absorbed in her husband's stables, — he kept a racing stud, — always preoccupied in choosing an effective name for the filly he had just started, or in some remedy — powder or pomade — for that unfortunate skin-disease, the Autheman malady, which returned with every change of season, just as it used to do at boarding-school, when she was only Deborah Becker.

When the lesson was finished, therefore, Éline hurried away, offering some excuse to avoid staying to breakfast, and preferring a cake and glass of ice-water taken in haste at the pastry-cook's counter, to those elegant repasts of rare meats and port wines, where the thick-lipped Baron, with his coarse laugh, joked her in his dull way about her marriage plans.

She felt more at ease at the Countess d'Arlot's, the little *hôtel* in the Rue Vézelay. It was in the vicinity of a Barnabites convent, and the very walls and draperies of the dwelling seemed saturated with an odor of incense and sanctity. Behind all this luxury and calm there lay a woman's great sorrow, a domestic drama with which Éline was well acquainted; for young girls in her social position are

soon initiated into the sad realities of life. Married for some years to a man to whom she was deeply attached, the Countess one day received a marriage visit from a niece, an orphan, whom she had reared in her home, and discovered the proof — and what a brutal, audacious proof! an embrace, a kiss, a sudden entrance into the room — that this young girl had been, and still was, her husband's mistress.

On account of the world's judgment, and of the respect in which her name was held, but especially for the sake of her daughter, whom she could not bear to have known as the child of a woman separated from her husband, Mme. d'Arlot avoided all rupture, and preserved the appearance of a united household, with such politeness and consideration as enemies compelled to live under the same roof owe to each other. But she never forgot and she never forgave, and as a solace to her grief, abandoned herself to a morbid and passionate devotion to religion, leaving to the care of governesses her child, who had already begun to divine many things from this abandonment, and whose little eyes at meals often strayed with restless, subtle curiosity from that over-polite father to that silent mother.

How many times Mme. Ebsen and Éline had said to each other that the poor Countess would have done better to bestow less of her time on churches, and give it to the care of her child and her home, and that her duties of wife and mother would certainly prove quite as consoling and much

less barren than her perpetual knee-bending. But now Éline understood her, and no longer reproached her for her exaggerated devotion, but only that this devotion had been so selfish and unproductive, her personal sorrow always dominating in her outpourings to God. What a difference between her religious devotion and the zeal of a Jeanne Autheman, the renunciation of a Watson?

"Which way are you going, Lina? I will drive you," Mme. d'Arlot said, after the lesson; and seated in her easy, comfortable carriage, the Countess, always nursing her sorrow and clinging to it, would give herself up to one of those disheartening confidences with which women so often exhaust and sadden one another. She instilled into the mind of that child, already full of disquiet, a distaste and contempt for life, the withdrawal from all its evanescent pleasures for that which endures throughout eternity. Sometimes they stopped and entered a church. Éline felt no scruple in doing so, Protestant churches remaining closed during the week, and all places of prayer having an atmosphere of mysticism which is pleasing to religious temperaments. In the deserted church of Saint-Clotilda she was better able to collect her thoughts and examine herself before God than she was on Sunday, during the unfeeling, conventional service in the Rue Chauchat.

One of the surprises of Paris is this Scandinavian temple in the very heart of the Quartier Montmartre, two steps from the Hôtel des Ventes. On

leaving the Boulevard des Italiens, nothing is more startling than to find oneself suddenly in the cold light falling from an arched vault, one half of which is glass, in the presence of a pastor in a long black gown, preaching in a harsh, guttural dialect. His words roll through the stone edifice, and rebound against the massive pews, upon which sit women with white throats and heavy blond plaits, and robust, square-shouldered men, a whole colony of Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes, with dazzling complexions, clear eyes, and beards like the gods of the North. Their names are all inscribed in the "book of the Scandinavians" in the Café de la Régence, and the bakers of the Rue Saint-Honoré bake a special kind of bread for them, made of rye flour and honey.

For many years this place had been to Éline a spot of delicious repose, and the hour that she passed there on Sunday, accompanying on the organ those Danish hymns that spoke to her of the unknown Fatherland, had filled her with delight. Today, however, she played inattentively. What pleasure could God take in those rhapsodies, sung in a commonplace, mechanical way by indifferent voices? It was just such perfunctory Christianity as this, with its routine services and its chilly faith, that was so revolting to Mme. Autheman. In Japan they have praying-machines which are wound up, and unroll their prayers, something after the fashion of hurdy-gurdies. The one is quite as capable as the other of touching the hearts of men.

And those coquettish young girls, twisting their

pretty bodies this way and that, their splendid waving hair falling over their shoulders with gleams of silver like the foam of a cascade, — they have no other thought, even in this sacred place, than of dress and vanities. See them observing one another, envying one another, out of the corners of their eyes! And the kindly, placid dames, with their frank, open faces, — true "puddin' heads," as they call the Danes in Germany, — bowing to one another and inviting their friends to abundant dinners and teas before they are well out of the church! Even to the sexton, dressed like a butler, with his sleepy, unruffled air, holding out his butterfly net at the end of a long pole for the collection; even to Pastor Birk, with his hair curled, holding his head on one side, casting greedy, languishing glances among the congregation, and ogling after service the young girls who would have the largest dowries! Everywhere about her, and in all those people, Éline recognized that indolence of the soul, spreading like mould on the pediments of the temple, like rust on the iron bars of the gate without. And when, on returning home, she saw old Aussandon in his little orchard, busy with watering-pot or pruning-shears, even he, in spite of so many proofs of his orthodoxy and zeal, in spite of the strictness of his life, the firmness of his faith, — Aussandon, the teacher, the Dean of the church, — even he seemed to her contaminated, like all the others, like herself. Indolence of the soul! Indolence of the soul!

Of these troubles of the young girl, of this slow penetration into her soul of a fixed idea, no one about her had the slightest suspicion. Mme. Ebsen, overcome with joy at this approaching marriage, which exceeded her dearest wishes, — her daughter to stay with her, and a son-in-law in the Government, — was already occupied in the household arrangements and trousseau. It was in vain for Éline to say: "Do not be in such haste. There is plenty of time." The mother, paying no attention to the lack of animation in the *fiancée*, — having herself made a common-sense marriage, — searched through her cupboards, unfolded sheets, selected among a lot of old relics the jewelry she would give her daughter, — a brooch, containing a portrait of her father, a string of pearls, one of those ornaments mounted in filigree worn in Northern countries; she measured laces, combining, piecing, and trying to save the best parts.

"See now, Linette. I have enough for the sleeves. If we could only find some to match for the neck. It would be splendid to have your wedding gown trimmed with Brussels lace."

Then she searched the shops, to lay in a supply of household linen, for the two families were to live together, and she could not count on much assistance from the lower floor. She had gone down there one day to make an examination with Sylvanire, and to see what was lacking; and, well! it was like those new countries of which Lorie spoke. Much room, and everything to be done! Still, with well-managed economy, with Lina's

lessons and translations, and Lorie's salary, they would get along very well, without taking into consideration the probability of the Sub-Prefect's return to favor. Chemineau had mentioned something of the kind to the Baroness. And the mother dreamed of seeing them installed in a Sub-Prefecture of the first class, say, even of the second, with a splendid garden on the sea, as at Cherchell, horses, a carriage, and a brilliant *salon*, where Mme. Ebsen would assist her daughter in doing the honors!

It was to Lorie, when he came up in the evening, in fine spirits, and confident of his happiness, that the mother told all these beautiful dreams. Glad of the lesson as an excuse, Éline escaped this idle talk. She was annoyed, even insulted, at this constant harping on her marriage. Married! And why? And during the shrill monotony of the childish recitation, Éline dreamed also, her thoughts far away, her eyes looking into vacancy, without the slightest interest in the progress of her pupil, or the least pleasure in seeing her in the little chair close to her skirts, in the very place she used to sit at Grandmother's knee, to learn some new tapestry or embroidery stitch. No, she was impatient to be at work on the new translation with which she had been intrusted: *Communions of a Christian Soul with God, by Madame* ——.

From her girlhood, Mme. Autheman had had intimate communions with the Almighty. This book was a collection of these, arranged in a series of questions and answers; and in an impassioned

preface, J. B. Crouzat, Director of the Port-Sauveur schools, explained why this intercourse with the Inaccessible, so shocking to the ideas of the modern mind, was, in reality, most simple and natural in her whom he called *The Great Mystic.* "*Indeed, in a soul entirely absorbed in God . . .*"

"Linette, listen to this excellent idea of M. Lorie,—an interior stairway uniting the two floors. Here is a plan he has made."

Lorie approached, and with the end of his eyeglass pointed out a splendid drawing, washed in India ink during his leisure hours at the office. "The stairs would come there, like this."

"Charming!" said Éline, without turning her head; and again she was buried in that sinister mysticism in which the Lyonnaise enveloped in gentle mists, like those of her native land, all the rancors of her youth. Then, Saint-Jacques striking ten, little Fanny threw her arms around her, and her gentle, trusting "Good-night, Mamma," reconciled poor Éline for a moment with the thought of marriage.

. . . . . .

One afternoon, when Mme. Ebsen was at home alone, making out her accounts, she received a visit so unexpected, so extraordinary, that in her surprise the spectacles of the good woman actually slipped from her nose. Mme. Autheman calling at her home! She would have liked to remove the walls of the anteroom to make a passage worthy of the fortune of the great banker's wife. Happily, the room was, as usual, in perfect order, the cur-

tains evenly drawn, the brasses shining on the table, the chairs in their places, with their handsome guipure scarfs. But what a sight she was, in that old worn house-gown and that every-day cap? *Mon Tieu! Mon Tieu!* And Linette not yet home, either.

"We can do without her," said Mme. Autheman, whose calm smile was as striking a contrast to the Danish woman's agitation as her quiet but stylish costume of silk and jet to the shabby gown of the good woman.

"Madame, you come perhaps for the *Communions?* Éline has not quite finished them. The dear little girl has only her evenings." And with that she launched forth on the busy life of her child, — her lectures, her lessons, her obstinacy in wishing to do everything herself.

"As she always says: You have worked enough, Mamma, you must rest now. Ah! she is but a child, you see. . . . "

This "you see," emphasized by two big tears, expressed more than the words she was seeking to find, and which the banker's wife seemed also to search in all the corners of the little *salon*, which her keen eyes were examining very minutely.

"How much does your daughter make by her lessons?" she inquired, when the mother had stopped talking.

"Oh! that depends, Madame."

There were dull seasons, when her pupils went away to watering-places or the seashore, or to distant country-homes. Éline had always refused

their invitations to go with them, for she was unwilling to leave her mother alone. In fact, she was just examining their little accounts. This year, it would amount to more than four thousand francs.

"I will give her double that amount if she will devote herself to our schools. . . ."

This was said carelessly, uttered with the indifference of a millionaire. Mme. Ebsen was dazzled. Eight thousand francs! What a windfall for the little household! But upon reflection, she did not think it would be possible. She would have to give up all the charming relations with their friends, the d'Arlots, the Baroness, on whom they counted for Lorie's advancement. Her daughter would never, she was sure, consent to it.

Mme. Autheman then urged the fatigue that Éline had to endure, and the danger for a young and pretty girl in beating about Paris alone, while, if Éline came to her, she would send her coupé for her every morning. Finally, after insisting, the mother consented to three days in the week. They arranged the terms and the hours. Éline would breakfast at Port-Sauveur, and return before dark. In any case, if she should be detained, there was plenty of room at the château.

Mme. Ebsen cried out with indignation:

"Oh, no, the idea! I should never close my eyes, if I did not know my little one was by my side."

The other brought the conversation to an end by rising to leave.

"Do you love your child very much?" she asked gravely.

"Yes, very much indeed," answered the mother, unconsciously affected by the serious tone of that strange question. "My child is all I have in the world. We have never been separated, and we shall never be separated."

"She is going to be married, however."

"Oh, yes, but we shall always be together. That was the first condition."

They reached the landing.

"I have been told that Monsieur Lorie is not of the true Church," observed Mme. Autheman, her hand on the balustrade, and without seeming to attach much importance to the question. The mother, descending the steps behind her, was slightly embarrassed to find a reply, knowing, as she did, the lady's opinions. To be sure, M. Lorie did not belong . . . But the marriage would take place in the temple. Oh, yes, Éline had insisted upon that.

"I bid you good-bye, Madame . . ." said the banker's wife, abruptly; and when Mme. Ebsen, all out of breath, her cap-strings flying, reached the door, the coupé had started at full speed, and her simple vanity was flattered that this visit had brought to her door, in sight of the whole astonished street, such a splendid equipage.

IX.

ON THE HILL-TOP.

ERIKSHALD, NEAR CHRISTIANIA.

WELL! my dear Éline, I have followed your advice, I have tried to tear myself away from that life of bondage in which the bit of bread I gained seemed so hardly won; and, since my body is too feeble to carry out the wishes of my soul, and I am compelled to vegetate outside the walls of my beloved convent, while the flames of the sanctuary still burn within me, I have endeavored to shelter this pure flame in the recesses of my native fiord, before this Norwegian sea that I have not seen for fifteen years.

My rupture with the Princess? Oh! sudden and fantastic, just as I might have expected in a person so whimsical. While passing through Buda-Pesth, I met a former companion of Kossuth, a true patriot, who had fallen into the deepest poverty, but who was dignified and proud beneath his rags, a hero, a saint. To assist him, and at the same time to express the respect and honor in which I held him, I invited him to sit beside me at the *table d'hôte*. What a scandal! All the ladies arose from the table, refusing to eat with a beggar, — as if the Divine Master, who washed the feet of the poor, had not twenty times given us the example of holy humility. The most indignant of all was the Princess, who, in spite of her pretension to liberal Christianity, is imbued with all the autocracy of her class and race. After a violent

quarrel, she abandoned me without a penny in that city in which I was entirely unknown, and I was obliged to appeal to our consul for a certificate of indigency in order to be sent back to my own country. This confirmation of my vow of poverty would, however, have left me calm and serene, had I but found here the asylum coveted.

Ah! My friend. . . .

Upon my arrival, it was at first a real pleasure to see again the little village by the sea, with its wooden houses, its belfry overlooking the water, like a watch-tower, the church, having for stained-glass windows only the deep blue of the sea, surrounded by the cemetery, all overgrown with weeds, its tombstones crowded together and tumbling over one another, as if they had been thrown down by the waves and the wind of the deep. A beautiful spot in which to pray and dwell in God, if one were not disturbed at every moment by the wickedness, the stupidity, the foolish chatter of the poor human brutes that browse there. No reflection of the light of heaven in those eyes, nor a thought of the life to come. On the low wall of the cemetery children play and romp; the housewives seated there also, sharpening their murderous tongues as they sew; and on Sunday evenings pretty girls disturb the peace of the dead with profane songs, running in and out among the graves, stirring with their frivolous skirts the intermingled shadows of the crosses, so weirdly elongated in the moonlight. But what I have seen at home saddens me still more.

The reception given me by my old parents on my arrival was most affectionate. A tender recollection of the solicitudes of other days, for the child who has become a woman, interested and astonished my father and mother, and they sought to find in my words, my looks,

and my slightest action something of my former childish self. But, as they became accustomed to my presence and resumed their daily habits, I saw that they had failed to find that which they sought, while on my side the separation was even broader. Who has changed, they or I?

My father is a carpenter, obliged, in spite of his advanced age, to work for his living. He builds those houses with birch-bark roofs, that tremble beneath the weight of the winter snows; he also makes the coffins of the parish, but without a pious thought in the accomplishment of his sad duty. He beguiles his task by singing coarse songs, and seeks to forget it in those gloomy distractions that bring tears to the eyes of so many women. He always keeps a big yellow bottle among the shavings under his work-bench. My mother at first complained, then implored him not to drink, but, repulsed by brutal hands, she has bent beneath the insults and the blows. The insidious poison of circumstances has infiltrated into her soul also, destroying the sense divine. Now she is no longer a wife, a mother; she is a slave, without dignity.

I know that I wound you by these confessions, that you consider my clairvoyance as impious. But, as I have so often told you, Éline, I have long since risen above earthly things, and, born a second time in God, I glorify myself for having lost all human sentiment. Hear the *dénouement* of this domestic drama. Yesterday morning when I was shut up in my little room, — a sort of convent cell with its plain wooden furniture, — where I take refuge at all times to pray, write, and meditate, and to kneel, O Jesus, before thy cross, the Guide of souls, I heard my father (the partitions are so thin) ask my mother brutally what I had come there for, since I did

not wish to sew or spin, or assist with the household work.

"Go tell her so," he cried, "go tell her so."

A moment later, my mother came softly up the stairs, moving around me with her usual air of embarrassment. She chided me gently for not occupying myself with something. My sisters were married; the youngest, at service in Christiania, managed to send a little help to her parents. My health was now better, and I must try to . . . or, then . . . I did not allow her to finish, but took between my hands the old face, whose kisses showered on my blond head had once been so sweet, and for a long time I bathed it with my tears, the last.

And now, since my own people will have no more of me, where am I to go? And yet so little is necessary to keep me alive. I have the offer of a position in St. Petersburg. Education, of course, that is to say, abasement and servitude. But what does it matter? This unfortunate attempt at family life has just convinced me that the world is dead to me, — my family, like all the rest. My heart is sealed to earthly ties, Éline, and nothing of human sweetness shall ever again penetrate it.

Éline received this letter from Henriette Briss one evening on returning from Port-Sauveur. She read it at the table, which was already laid for dinner, its two covers opposite each other, and the bouquet that Mme. Ebsen never failed to arrange in a glass near her darling for this meal which they took together, and which she made a daily *fête*. While waiting for her mother to come in, Éline sat there, motionless, without even removing her gloves and toque, staring at this open letter that expressed the same ideas of death,

renunciation, and annihilation in God, that were preached down there at Port-Sauveur. Although set forth in different terms, these ideas seemed to be alike in the two religions. In the terrible conflict that was raging within her, what a fatality that this discouraged voice from Henriette Briss should come at that particular time to add its support to the words of Jeanne Autheman!

A door opened. Her mother entered. She concealed the letter in her pocket, knowing what Mme. Ebsen would think of it. Why discuss, when people cannot understand each other? How could she confess that without, alas! having *risen above earthly things*, she now understood that there was a higher duty, one nearer Heaven, than that of family, and that those blasphemous words of Henriette no longer excited her indignation?

"Are you here, Linette? I did not see you. I was downstairs with Sylvanire. Have you been here long? . . . But take off your hat. . . ."

Éline seemed so weary, so exhausted, as she always was when she returned from Port-Sauveur. She removed her hat with so much indifference, without even a glance in the mirror to see that her hair was in order, and at the table she ate so little and was so absent, scarcely replying to the tender solicitudes of the mother, that Mme. Ebsen began to be uneasy.

As was their custom in summer, they dined by the open window that looked out upon the garden, and there came to them the sound of merry cries and laughter mingled with the blithesome songs

the birds were singing as a good-night to the setting sun.

"See there! Monsieur Aussandon has his grandchildren with him to-day. It must be rather fatiguing for the poor man. . . . Madame Aussandon is away from home. I hear that the Major is going to be married."

A pure invention of the good lady's was this marriage, to try and discover whether, by chance, Éline did not, deep down in her heart, retain a little sentiment for him. For some days she had been so cold toward Lorie. But when to the innocent glance of the mother Éline responded with an "Ah! Indeed?" of frank indifference, she knew it could not be that.

Then Mme. Ebsen tormented herself still more. She scrutinized those lovely eyes, around which bluish rings had appeared, and her face growing sharp and thin, and losing all its fresh, youthful roundness. Evidently, something extraordinary was the matter with her little girl. She endeavored to question her about the days she passed at Port-Sauveur, her hours for class-work and recreation.

"As you say, the school is quite near the château, and you go only from one to the other? You do not have enough exercise, dearie. Five hours in the class-room, with no relaxation, are too exhausting. But you have been to the lock, at least, to see Maurice?"

No, she had not been there. Then Mme. Ebsen launched forth in sympathetic lamentations about

the poor little fellow. He seemed to be a little neglected in the midst of all the joy and the wedding preparations.

"His father thinks it an advantage for him to remain down there, on account of his naval studies, but indeed, I do not see what he can learn there. Ah! my daughter, how much good you are going to do in that family! What a noble duty for a good and serious woman like yourself!"

Very serious, in truth, since nothing could arouse her from that torpor of indifference or fatigue, which held her at the table, even after the meal was finished, gazing far away beyond the cluster of trees, at the same point in the golden sky, in a never-ending reverie.

"Let us go out a little, girlie. Do you not want to? The evening is so lovely. We will get Fanny as we go down."

Éline at first refused, but yielded to her mother's entreaties.

"Very well . . . if you wish it. Let us go," she replied, in a tone as if she had made a resolution, had come to a serious decision.

On these beautiful summer evenings the flower-gardens of the Luxembourg, all that side which borders the old nursery garden, whose shrubbery it has retained, resembles — with its flower-beds, its Japanese clematis, twisting in festooms its tendrils, and purple bell flowers, its clusters of yuccas and hot-house cacti, its statues of dazzling whiteness — a verdant and beautiful park, freshly sprinkled for the comfort of the promenaders.

None of the dust of the broad avenues here, none of the noise of the Boulevard Saint-Michel. The sparrows bathe in the sand, and skim along the top of the grass along with the blackbirds, that have become tame from having the children feed them from their luncheon.

From all the neighboring streets there comes after dinner along these winding paths, in the direction of the model apiary, or the fruit-trees pruned in the form of a distaff and making a fruit-wall, a population entirely different from that which frequents the terraces; — small tenants, entire families; women who bring their work or their book, and with backs turned to the path, and faces toward the verdure, exhaust the last gleam of daylight; people who walk with their noses buried in their newspapers; swarms of children calling one another, pursuing one another, or little tots just learning to walk, and out of doors at this late hour because the mother works all day.

Lorie, having placed Mme. Ebsen's folding stool before a border of iris, whose satiny tints and aquatic perfume she loved, proposed to Éline to walk on a little farther. She accepted eagerly, even feverishly, contrary to her manner of the last few days, when she had seemed rather to avoid a *tête-à-tête*. The poor man could not conceal his joy. He held himself erect, and seemed much younger, as they walked down toward the English garden, and met other couples, betrothed, perhaps, like themselves. Talking earnestly in his most beautiful style, he scarcely noticed the young girl's

silence, which he took for a reserve that naturally increased, now that the wedding day was drawing near. For while the day was not yet fixed, "in the vacation" had been decided on, as all the pupils would then be out of the city, the lectures would be finished, and there would be plenty of time to settle themselves in their housekeeping. In the vacation! and it was now July.

Ah! this glorious July, radiant with sunshine and promises. The lover was fairly dazzled and blinded by its brilliancy, like those windows, yonder in the Boulevard, flaming through the foliage with the splendors of the setting sun, and making for their walk an illuminated horizon.

"No, no, play on ahead . . ." said Éline to little Fanny, who came running up to her side. The child obeyed, and ran in among a flock of swallows and chirping sparrows hopping about almost under the feet of the passers-by, or flying from the shrubbery to the statues, where they alighted on the mane of the lion of Cain or on the uplifted finger of Diana. The day was falling, and violet shadows began to creep along the ground. With downcast look Éline followed them, then suddenly:

"I have learned something that has troubled me very much. It seems that Maurice is preparing for his first Communion."

Maurice had, in fact, just written to his father that he was attending catechism class at Petit-Port, and that the Curé was exceedingly proud to have a communicant this year. But what was there in that to vex her?

"I should have been informed of it at first," she exclaimed severely, "and I should not have permitted it. Since I am to be the mother of these children, and since you wish me to be their guide in life, I intend that they shall have the same religion as mine, — the only one, the true one . . ."

Could this be Lina, the charming girl with the placid smile, speaking in this sharp, positive tone? Could it, indeed, be she, saying with a harsh gesture, "Go away!" to the child who had run up to them, and stopped suddenly, struck by the change in their voices and faces? The garden all around them seemed transformed too. It was larger, and was growing more indistinct, and the lights in the distant windows were dying out one by one in the deepening blue twilight. Lorie felt suddenly overcome with a melancholy that left him scarcely the strength to attempt to argue against the cold resolution of Éline. However, she was too reasonable not to understand. He had a scruple in the matter. It was a case of conscience. The children were Catholics, as their mother had been, and were it only out of respect for the dead . . . She interrupted him sharply:

"You must choose . . . I can never bind myself to a life under such conditions, with differences of faith, of religion, and a future of discord."

"Éline, Éline, when people truly love each other, does not the heart rise above such things?"

"Nothing is above religious faith. . . ."

Night had come, the birds were silent in the trees, and the promenaders, now become few,

hurried on, as they heard the signal of the hour for closing, toward the only gate yet open, while on the horizon the glow faded from the last window. Of Lina Lorie saw nothing but two big eyes that he scarcely recognized, so little did their fixedness resemble the sweetness and gentleness that usually shone in the friendly glance.

"I shall not speak to you again of this matter," she said, "but now you know my conditions."

The mother, seeing that they delayed, approached them with Fanny.

"Come! We must go home. It is a pity, too, on such a beautiful evening." And she continued to talk unheeded, as they walked on, side by side in appearance, but in reality as far apart as the veriest strangers.

"You will be up directly, of course?" observed Mme. Ebsen at the foot of the stairs. Lorie entered his room without trusting himself to reply, and allowed the child to take her books and go upstairs alone. She came back again almost immediately, hardly able to speak, for the sobs that shook the little body.

"There will be no more lessons. Made . . . Mademoiselle sent me away. She does not want to be my Mamma any more. Oh! dear me."

Sylvanire took her in her arms, and carried her away to her room, the child choking and sobbing bitterly all the while.

"Hush, my darling. Don't cry any more. *I* shall never leave you. Do you understand? Never."

One would have said that there was joy in the fierce embrace and noisy kisses of the servant, and that she was happy to have regained her child, foreseeing the rupture, as she had divined the love.

A moment afterwards, Mme. Ebsen came in, violently agitated.

"Oh! dear, dear, my poor Lorie!"

"She has told you, then? Can it be possible? As for me, I do not say . . . I love her so well that I would do anything to please her. But, these children . . . When I know that it was their mother's wish, I have no right . . . And to send Fanny away as she did . . . She is crying yet, poor little thing! Listen."

"Éline is crying too, upstairs. She has locked herself in her room, to keep me from entering. She will not let me talk to her. Can you realize that? We, who have never had a secret from each other."

And, aroused in her phlegmatic but tender nature, the good woman kept repeating over and over again:

"But what is the matter with her? What is the matter with her?"

Her daughter was entirely changed. She no longer played on the piano, she never read, and seemed utterly indifferent to everything that had once given her pleasure. She would hardly consent to go out for a little walk. "Why, this very evening, I had to compel her . . . and besides, she is so pale, and has no appetite. I believe it is the death of her grandmother."

"And Port-Sauveur . . . and Mme. Autheman," added Lorie, gravely.

"You think so?"

"I tell you, it is that woman. It is she who is robbing us of our Lina."

"Yes, perhaps . . . you may be right . . . "

But they paid so well, they were so rich; and while the poor lover, not in the least moved by these considerations, shook his head sadly, she concluded: "Well! well! It will all come right," as one who wishes to be deceived, and awaits misfortune with closed eyes.

All that night and the next day, as he mechanically performed his duties at the office, Lorie adhered to his resolution not to yield. His work, that of a subordinate, consisted in clipping from the newspapers all articles, no matter how short, in which the Minister was mentioned, and of affixing on the margin of the slip the name of the journal from which it was taken. On this day, a tragic one in his life, he was despatching his work with all haste, his mind diverted from his task by two or three rough draughts of a letter that he had composed to Lina, elaborated with difficulty amidst the platitudes and laughter that came from the desks of his colleagues, when, in the afternoon, he was summoned to the room of his Director.

It was no longer Chemineau. He had left some time ago. Continuing his rapid advancement, the former Prefect of Algiers at the hands of the Minister had received the Superintendence of

the Department of Public Safety, and was even spoken of as Prefect of Police. "*Chemineau chemine,*" they said in the office. His successor, an apoplectic divisionary, proceeded to make a terrible scene with his employé.

"Was such a thing ever seen? Such an omission of respect toward His Excellency!"

"I? I have failed in respect?"

"Why, most certainly. Monsieur allows himself to make abbreviations. Monsieur writes *Mon. Univ.* for *Moniteur Universel.* Would you expect the Minister to understand? He has not understood, Monsieur. He could not, and he ought not to understand. Ah! take care, Monsieur, you old Sixteenth of May man!"

This was the last blow to a man already down. He remained all the rest of the day as if stunned, saying to himself that Lina lost to him had also taken away his auspicious star. It was even worse, when in the evening, on his return, he learned that Fanny had eaten nothing all day, and had remained at the window, watching for Mademoiselle, who, when she passed, had not deigned to turn her head to the little girl's pitiful appeals of "Mamma! Mamma!"

"And that, Monsieur, was very cruel," said Sylvanire, indignantly. "Our child may be made ill by it." Then, after a moment's hesitation: "I was thinking, if Monsieur was willing, that we two could go to the lock for a little visit. The fresh air, and the pleasure of seeing her brother, would bring her around."

"Very well; go if you like," replied Lorie, dejectedly.

After dinner he went into his room, to try if a little of his favorite occupation would not distract his mind. As he had not indulged in any classification for a long time, he was obliged to brush the dust from the boxes, and found that he could scarcely remember the system of numbers and references by which the Government complicates its most trifling documents, and which he had adopted for the arrangement of his own papers. In spite of his efforts, it was impossible for him to concentrate his thoughts on what he was doing, for they persistently ascended to the floor above, to that pitiless Éline, whose light footsteps he could distinguish, going from the window to the table, from the piano to Grandmother's chair. Every bare corner of the room reminded him of the one above, well-furnished, dainty, and pleasant to the eye.

He was thinking, poor man, and his conscience, influenced by his wishes, had come to the point of a compromise, a subterfuge. It was only just, after all, what she demanded; her husband, her children, herself, united before the same God, — since there were several, it seemed, — and the whole family consolidated in this pious tie. Moreover, the State recognized this religion as well as the other; and for a functionary of the Government, this was an essential point.

Even considering only his children, where would he find a more tender, a more sensible, a more

motherly mother? And, if he renounced a second marriage, they would henceforth be left to the care of their nurse. Maurice, to be sure, had decided on his profession, his future was assured; but Fanny . . . He recalled her as she was when she had come from Algiers, with red hands, a coarse shawl like Sylvanire's, her cap, her humble manner, that indefinable odor that clings to the children of the poor.

In his despair he called to his aid the memory of his dear, dead wife.

"Help me, advise me."

But in vain did he invoke her memory. He could no longer see her, but in her place arose the fair and rosy image of Éline Ebsen, so youthful and tempting. She had taken away all from him, even the memory of his early happiness. Ah! wicked Lina.

It was evident that his work of classification would make slight progress this evening. Lorie went to his open window and leaned out. Opposite him, on the other side of the garden, he could see Aussandon's window lighted also, and the silhouette of the Dean bent over his desk. He had never spoken to the tall old man, but he knew him by sight, and often bowed to him when they met. Strong and erect beneath the weight of his seventy-five years, his white curling hair and beard framed a face full of benevolence and intelligence. Mme. Ebsen had told Lorie of his splendid achievements, so that he was familiar with every detail of his history.

A native of Cevennes and a peasant, Aussandon, had he been alone, would never have left his first parish at Mondardier, in the Mézenc, with his temple built of the black stone of the country, his vineyard, his flowers, his bees, which he liked to tend in the leisure hours of his parish work, bringing the same gentleness of spirit to his priestly duties as to his gardening; finding a sermon under his spade, and sowing the seed from his pulpit.

On Sunday, at the conclusion of the services in the village, he went up on the mountain to preach to the shepherds, the wood-cutters, and the cheese-makers. With three wooden steps for a pulpit, he taught them, far above the pines and the chestnut-trees, in that elevated region where no vegetation flourishes, where, but for the insects, no living creature dwells. His most beautiful sermons were preached there, delivered in grand but simple language. With a pastoral horizon spread out before him, from which all civilized humanity seemed absent, the tinkle of the bells on the flocks scattered over the hills, moving away into the distance, or grazing near the little gathering, was the only sound that answered the pastor's voice. That accent of the hills, refreshing and bold, that ruggedness of speech in which the patois of the country often figured, and flattered the audience, Aussandon never lost, and to them he owed later his fame as a preacher in Paris. The sermon ended, he dined in a hut, on a plate of chestnuts; then he descended the mountain, accompanied by a crowd of people, singing as they went. Some-

times he would be overtaken by one of those terrific mountain storms, when the thunder, lightning, and hail burst out simultaneously beneath his feet and above his head, and encompassed him about, like Moses in the Bible.

He would have liked to remain all his days unknown, in this secluded corner of the world, but Mme. Aussandon did not permit it. This terrible little woman, the daughter of a tax-collector in the neighborhood, was as fresh and ruddy as a child of nature. With the robust and tidy appearance of a village maiden, she had bright eyes, a prominent mouth, and protruding lips, with the pointed, projecting teeth of a good-natured house-dog, who, however, never lets go his morsel. It was she who led her husband, stimulated him, harassed him, was ambitious, not for him only, but even more for their sons, who were as numerous as the acorns on an oak. She had managed to have him called to Nîmes, then to Montauban, then to Paris, where she finally conducted him. His knowledge and his eloquence were his own, but it was Bonne, as he called his wife when he tried to restrain her, it was Bonne who brought him into the light, who, in spite of him, made his position and his fortune.

Economical for two, — for Aussandon gave away everything to the villagers, linen, clothing, even to the wood from his fireside, which, when his wife carried away the key of the woodshed, he threw out of the window to the poor, — she had contrived to rear her eight sons. No one had ever seen a hole in their shoes or their trousers, for she mended

and patched far into the night. There was always a piece of sewing or knitting in her hand, on which she worked while talking, walking, and, later on, even in the railroad cars and diligences, when going about to visit her little people, scattered around in different schools in which she had obtained free scholarships. This activity with which she was possessed, she required from others also, and she gave her husband no peace until their eight sons were married and settled in life, some in Paris, the others in different parts of France or in foreign lands. To accomplish all this, he had been obliged to add to his income by attendance on interments and marriages, — worldly and tiresome ceremonies for which Pastor Aussandon was in great demand, for he had by this time made a name for himself distinct from others, above all parties and rivalries between the Orthodox and the Liberals.

The poor, great man certainly had more glory and occupation than he desired, for he regretted unceasingly the leisure and freedom that he had enjoyed at Mondardier, and longed for his sermons on the mountain. He was finally elected to the Faculty of Theology, and his wife then allowed him to indulge himself after his own pleasure, and to resume in their little house in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce the calm and contemplative life that had been his in the Mézenc. "On the hill-top!" It was in these words that he described his present ease and comfort, gained at the price of so many moral anxieties and privations,

and which he enjoyed much as an epicure does his way of living. He was unhappy only when his beloved tyrant left him, and, in spite of her age, went travelling to visit one of her boys.

Neither distance nor fatigue, nothing discouraged this little old lady. Sometimes Paul, the Major, during a drill, would see her appear in camp, making her way in and out among the battalions and companies, peeping in at the entrances of the tents. Sometimes the engineer at Commentry, standing at the opening of a black drift assisting the miner's bucket to descend, would exclaim:

"Hello! there's Mamma! . . ."

At this very moment Mother Aussandon was again on her travels. But for that, the Dean would never have worked so late by an open window. Calm and thoughtful, he was preparing his lecture for the next day; and it was seeing him thus alone that had suggested to Lorie the idea of going to visit him. He had but to cross the garden, tap gently on the door, and he was in the study. A comfortable room, this, with unbound books lying about on the floor, and a large portrait of Mme. Aussandon hanging above the desk, watching with attentive eyes, and a smile ready to break into scolding, the work of the excellent man.

Immediately, without many words, Lorie explained what had brought him hither. He wished to be converted, he and his children, to the Reformed Religion. He had been considering the step for a long time, and now he was eager, very

eager to set about it. What must he do? Aussandon smiled gently, and calmed him with a gesture. As for the children, they had but to be sent to "Sunday-school." Lorie himself must be thoroughly acquainted with his new beliefs; he must study, compare, learn to judge and see for himself, since this religion of truth and light permitted it, yes, even commanded it of all its faithful ones. The Dean would recommend him to a pastor, for he himself was old and worn-out. No one would have guessed it in that noble presence, or from those energetic words that were most disconcerting to the weak and vacillating Lorie. Oh, yes, very old, very weary, on the hill-top!

There was a moment of silence, and a feeling of embarrassment between the two men. Lorie turned away his eyes, a little troubled because of his rash act. The Dean, seated at his desk, gazed down at the blank page before him, and seemed to be stimulated to thought.

"It is on Éline's account, is it not?" he asked, after a moment.

"Yes."

"She exacts that of you?"

"She does, or, at least, those who influence her."

"I know . . . I know . . ."

He did know. He had often seen Mme. Autheman's carriage stop before the door; he knew the woman, and the intrigues of which she was capable.

If Bonne had not forbidden him, he would long

ago have warned the mother. Even now, penetrating to the bottom of the plot, of which Lorie had given him but a glimpse, he would have liked to speak.

"Oh! yes. I know her, that Jeanne Autheman. She is a woman who breaks and tears the closest ties, a creature without heart, without pity. Wherever she passes, are tears, disunion, solitude. Warn the mother, for it is not you alone who is concerned in this matter. See that she takes Lina away at once, far away. See that she snatches her from this living death, from this devourer of souls, who is as cold as a ghoul in the cemetery. Perhaps there is still time. . . ."

Aussandon thought all this, but he dared not say it, because of the little old lady there before him, sitting erect in her frame and holding him in check with her prudent peasant glance, and her firm jaw, ready to leap down upon him if he had spoken.

X.

THE RETREAT.

PUNCTUAL and solemn, like all the occupations at the château, breakfast at Port-Sauveur, in the absence of the banker, reunites every morning at eleven o'clock the principal personages of the religious household of Jeanne Autheman. The places are always the same: the President at the end of a long table, Anne de Beuil at her right, at her left J. B. Crouzat, the teacher, with hollow cheeks, a short, stubby Calvinist beard, and blue, globulous eyes, flaming with fanatical fire, bulging from under a peaked forehead.

A native of Charente, the country of Anne de Beuil, he was attending Aussandon's lectures, with the view of entering the ministry, when some friends took him to hear one of the sermons of the Evangelist. He left the place in that state of exalted emotion that certain preachers draped in their white robes cause in their worldly-minded devotees. With him, however, the impression was more enduring, and for five years he had abandoned family and friends, and had sacrificed his career for the modest place of primary instructor that kept him near Jeanne. Among the country people he passed for her lover, for these coarse

peasants could explain in no other way the fervor of the disciple hanging on the words of the apostle. But the Evangelist had never had a lover; and the only passionate words that had ever fallen from those secretive, clearly chiselled lips have remained suspended, crystallized, among the icicles of the Mer de Glace.

Opposite the Charentais sits Mlle. Hammer, the director of the Girls' School, a doleful person, with eyes always downcast. She never speaks, unless she is addressed, and then replies with a plaintive "Yes," of mournful approval, which she pronounces "M-n-yees." Over all this poor creature there is a crushed look, from the curved shoulders to the diminutive nose on the pale white face, flattened, it might be supposed, by the original fall. So profound within her is the impression made by that first sin, and so overburdened is she by the thought of it, that, incapable of any outside propagandism, timid and of limited intelligence as she is, she hardly dares to direct even her class of little children.

The end of the table, in the place reserved for Pastor Birk on Sundays, is occupied by that pupil, boy or girl, who deserves the highest marks for recitation in the Holy Scriptures. Education at Port-Sauveur is exclusively religious, consisting in committing to memory verses from the Bible, from which are drawn all the lessons, copies for writing in round and running hand, and even the illustrated A B Cs. So great is the faith of Jeanne Autheman in the Gospel, that she believes that,

even though incomprehensible, it acts on the pupils in the same way as the copies of the Koran, which Arabs bind on their foreheads when ill. And it is pitiable to see the greatest of books hemmed and hawed over, stammered over and yawned over by those little peasant voices, stained by the dirt of their hands and the tears of their idleness.

Young Nicolas, the former pensioner of La Petite-Roquette, is the most perfect product of this system of education; consequently it is he who nearly always occupies the seat of honor opposite the President. This boy knows the Scriptures by heart, — all the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Deuteronomy, the Psalms, the Epistles of Paul; and at every turn, and without being questioned, he comes out with some inappropriate quotation uttered in an inarticulate voice that seems to come from the horn of a phonograph. All around him are silent; they listen and admire. It is God speaking through the mouth of this youth. And what a mouth! When one thinks of all the impieties and abominations that it unloaded three years ago in the prison for young criminals! Is it not miraculous, and a most signal testimony in favor of Evangelical schools? So much the more, because there still cling to Nicolas a few stains of his former state of wickedness, — lying, gluttony, prevarication; and because the edifying spectacle is frequently seen of a combat between the good and evil spirit in that imperfectly cleansed conscience, and in his language, in which the

words of the preacher constantly and with great difficulty correct the slang of the prisons.

It is beside this phenomenon that Éline takes her place on the days when she breakfasts at the château. Her circumstances are known to them all, and the impious marriage she is about to contract. They know also that the cure of her soul has begun, but that the malady is obstinate and resists all their efforts. All the gentleness and indomitable patience of Mme. Autheman are required to combat such a stubborn will. Anne de Beuil would long ago have chased from the temple with scourges this creature destined to hell-fire. "You wish to burn, child of Satan; very well, then, burn. . . ." This also is the opinion of J. B. Crouzat.

Éline is conscious of the hostility by which she is surrounded. No one speaks to her, no one condescends to notice her presence, except with glances of anger or scorn. Even under the stolid face of the sacristan who waits upon the table, she lowers her head, intimidated, and realizing from the depths of her heart her inferiority among so many saintly personages.

Yet, with all the oppression of these tedious breakfasts at Port-Sauveur, with their convent dishes, — the boiled meat, the watery vegetables, the stewed prunes, — in the solemnity of this long table, with the seats placed far apart, there is something grave and sacred that arouses her religious emotions, as if, unworthy though she is, she were present at the Lord's Supper. She loves to hear

the conversation, which they carry on in subdued voices, and that mystical vocabulary which seems to be wafted from above, and of which she catches such emblematical words as *vineyard*, *tent*, *flock*, or abstractions such as *trials*, *atonement*, the *wind of the desert*, and the *breath of the Spirit*. She is interested in many things that she does not understand, and which they discuss before her, although she takes no part in the conversation, — the *Work*, the *Workers*, that mysterious *Retreat*, into which she has never penetrated, the chronicle of the religious community of the neighborhood, the moral condition of such and such a family.

"I am much pleased with Gelinot. . . . Grace is working . . ." says Anne de Beuil, who kept a detective's eye upon every corner of the village, and outside it for a radius of ten miles. Or again: "Baraquin is backsliding. . . . I see he is beginning to stay away from service. . . ." Thereupon follows a vehement attack against indifferent Christians, who were renegades and apostates wallowing like swine, in the mire of their sins. Éline is aware that this delicate comparison is meant for her, although it would be difficult to establish any analogy between this Biblical animal and that sweet face flushed with shame, a crimson ear glowing through masses of blond hair.

"Anne, Anne, let us never despair of any sinner. . . ."

And by a motion of the hand, Mme. Autheman calms the sectarian, imitating the infinite gentleness of Jesus when he rebuked Simon the Pharisee.

Then, with her unfailing calmness, eating and drinking with measured movements, she converses freely and at length, in that persuasive voice which causes J. B. Crouzat to catch his breath in admiration, and soothes poor Éline, and transports her away into a mystical dream, into a golden glory in which she would wish to pass away and vanish like an ephemera in the sunshine.

But why does this young girl, so amiable in appearance, so sweet and sensitive in her nature, who is moved to tears when the enormity of her sin is shown her, why does she rebel so long and refuse to come to a positive decision? She has been coming to Port-Sauveur for nearly a month, and the President is astonished at having, as yet, obtained no result. Can Anne de Beuil be right, after all? Is sin to triumph over this soul, so precious in many ways to the *Work?* Mme. Autheman begins to be apprehensive; and this morning when she enters the hall punctually at eleven, and sees no Éline standing humbly, waiting, as usual, at her place, she thinks:

"This is the end . . . she will not come again."

But the door opens, and the young girl appears. She is full of animation, and, in spite of her tardiness, a look of assurance shines in her eyes, beneath eyelids swollen with tears. There was an obstruction on the track, causing a stop of fifteen minutes at Choisy. She makes the explanation tranquilly, takes her place at the table, and, with no embarrassment whatever, asks the beadle for bread. They are talking; she joins in the conversation, entirely

at her ease, uses the words *tent, vineyard, flock,* like an adept, and is not in the least confused until Anne de Beuil, in her snappish way, asks:

"Who are those people at the lock? The woman came yesterday by the coach. A big, brazen creature who stares you in the face. She had a little girl by the hand, a sister of young Maurice, it seems. Some more small fry for the Curé!"

Éline has turned pale, tears come to her eyes. Fanny, her child, here, very near her! Beneath the lowered lids she can see the dainty, darling head, and the smooth, pretty braids, tied with a ribbon. Ah! dear little girl . . . And suddenly, beside her, a harsh, rattling voice breaks the silence of the dismayed table:

"The kid at the lock? Ah, the deuce — I gave the cur a nice chase this morning. . . ."

It is a breath of his evil nature escaping from the lips of young Nicolas. The wretched boy seems himself terrified by what he has just said; and on his face, swollen, convulsed, and purple, as if he had swallowed some food the wrong way, is seen the horrible struggle between the good and evil spirits. Finally the young rascal, with a long swallow of water, extricates himself from his difficulty, and with a deep sigh of relief attacks a verse from Ecclesiastes:

"*My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*"[1]

[1] This verse is found in Psalm lxiii. 5, not in Ecclesiastes. — TRANSLATOR.

Hallelujah! The devil is once more overthrown. A sigh of satisfaction goes around the table; and amid the tumult of the noon train rushing by, all rise, and fold their napkins, singing, as they do so, a hymn of praise to the Eternal.

"Is it true? Is it true? Ah, my dear child, let me embrace you for the good news."

It is the cold Jeanne Autheman who rapturously presses Éline to her heart and draws her away:

"Come quickly, and tell me all about it." At the door of the little *salon* she changes her mind:

"No, not here . . . at the Retreat. . . . It will be better there."

At the Retreat! What an honor for Lina!

On the sunny balcony, on which the long capes cast dark shadows, Anne de Beuil stops her mistress as she passes:

"Baraquin is there."

"Speak to him . . . I have no time." Then softly, with an expressionless smile: "She is saved;" and Mme. Autheman moves on, her arm within Éline's, while her acolyte begins to question the old boatman, who has risen from the bench on which he was waiting, his cap in one hand, with the other scratching his cranium, which was as hard, round, and damp as a stone by the edge of the water.

"Baraquin, why do you no longer attend the meetings?

"I 'm goin' to tell you. . . ."

With a regretful eye he watches the black skirt

disappear around a bend in the path, knowing that he would have had a much easier time with the Evangelist than with this old wolf in linen cap.

"I 'm very sure that Madame Autheman's religion is just as good as any other, and no curé could say mass as slick as she does. . . . But, then, what can I do? Old people have to do as their children like, and *they* all live far off, where there is n't no meeting. They want me to go to their church, and, indeed, I must say, that when I went t' other Sunday to the church of the Bon Dieu at Juvisy, all the candles and bright things and the beautiful Blessed Virgin, all that made me feel as if a lot of grub was stirred up in this poor old dad's stomach."

This is not the first time that old Baraquin has played this comedy, to haul in forty francs and a new coat. Anne de Beuil resists, and nothing is more comical than to see them both finessing, peasant against peasant, bargaining just as if they had been at market in Sceaux for this horny old soul, which was certainly not worth the money. But what a triumph for the Curé if Baraquin should return to his old church! However, she allows him to go, muttering as he hobbled away, back bent double, twisted, walking sideways; a false exit. Half-way down the balcony, Anne de Beuil calls him back:

"Baraquin."

"Pardon?"

And she ascends before him the three steps leading to the small green *salon*. As he passes

young Nicolas, a silent witness to this scene, the peasant winks his eye, and the other, with eyes rolled upward until nothing but the whites is visible, his head on one side, sanctimoniously blurts out an appropriate verse:

"*I have caused thy iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.*"

Then, when he is again alone, he throws aside his hypocritical mask, and with hands in his pockets he skedaddles, whistling as he goes, over the foot-bridge that crosses the railroad track, where for one instant is outlined the thin, vicious face of the blackguard.

During the month that she had been coming to Port-Sauveur Éline had seen nothing of the estate except the parterre laid out in flower-beds, Gabrielle's stairs, and the avenue of elms that made a long, luminous line toward the white buildings of the temple and schools. It was in the avenue that Madame Autheman had walked with her of late, to catechise her, and show her the consequences that would follow her impious marriage.

"God will strike you through your mother and your children; your face, like that of Job, will be stained with tears."

The poor child struggled, pleaded her promised word, her pity for the motherless children, and returned to her home wretched and undecided, to repeat, two days later, the same mournful walk under the fragrant elms, where birds were singing joyfully over her head, and the sun sifted through the branches in bright patches which the black

gowns seemed to gather up as they passed. As the Evangelist spoke to her of death and of the Divine Atonement, Lina felt that from her torn and bleeding heart all will-power and all belief in happiness were slipping away.

This time Mme. Autheman went beyond her usual place of turning and crossed the entire park, with its copses evenly cut in quincuncial forms, its cleanly raked and well-kept avenues, which here seemed wider, on account of the stateliness of the French style of gardening, the arbor curiously pruned in the form of porches, peristyles with box-trees shaped like balls, yew-trees looking like elevated vases, in imitation of marble, with ivy and acanthus wound about them. Jeanne was silent, and leaned on the arm of the neophyte, who was deeply agitated by this primeval silence, broken only by the *frou-frou* of their skirts, or the cracking of the twigs that the Lyonnaise, with her instinct of regularity, removed from her path.

A gate stopped them. Jeanne Autheman made it slide back on its rusty hinges; then the aspect of the land changed, and became rural and wild. They saw pathways overgrown with grass, clusters of shimmering birch-trees in fields brilliant with heather, gay hedges swarming with birds, beech-trees and oaks under which were beds of moss. It was like some old forest plantation. In the midst of a glade was a chalet built of pine, a real Swiss chalet, with its exterior stairs, its small latticed windows, its veranda running beneath the long

sloping roof, which was held in place by large rocks, to protect it from the mountain storms.

The Retreat!

Early in her married life, Jeanne had had built in the second park, far removed from the refineries and the reprobate house, this refuge, pious souvenir of the Grindelwald and of her first communion with the Inaccessible. Having instituted the *Work*, it was here that she sheltered her *Workers*, the elect, destined to spread the Gospel, and from whom she required a probation of several months, under her eyes. On the lower floor was the Hall for Prayers, as sad and dreary a place as it is between decks on one of those mission-boats that carry the Gospel to the English whalers in the Northern seas. Here it was that the *Workers* practised preaching and that Mme. Autheman and J. B. Crouzat gave them a few lessons in theology and vocal music. The remainder of the time was passed in their rooms in meditation and prayer, until the day when, judged worthy, Jeanne imprinted a kiss on their forehead and sent them away, with the words of the Bible:

"*Go, my child, and work in my vineyard.*"

And they departed, poor creatures, and settled in some great manufacturing centre,—Lyons, Lille, Roubaix,—in those places where sin makes the greatest ravages, and where souls are blacker than the skins of African savages, black as the narrow alleys, black as the ground begrimed with coal-dust, black as the implements of their trade. In the very heart of the faubourg they installed them-

selves, and commenced the work of grace, during the day instructing the children after the admirable method of Port-Sauveur, and in the evening preaching the good news. But the vineyard was hard and stony, and the vintage far from abundant. Almost everywhere they spoke in bleak, empty halls, or had to endure the jokes of the workmen, coarse even to insult, their annoyances aggravated all the more by the vexations they suffered from the municipal officers, and from which the influence of the Authemans at that distance from Paris could not always shield them.

Without, however, becoming discouraged, they continued to sow the Divine seed at haphazard in unfriendly soil. They were full of confidence, for it is written that even in the most hardened soul a little faith, *not larger than a grain of mustard seed*, can bear fruit and increase. Convinced they must have been, to be willing to accept, in consideration of a hundred francs a month, this dreary, solitary existence to which Mme. Autheman condemned them, for she severed every tie of affection in her neophytes with the same indifference that she cut away the troublesome twigs from her shrubbery. It was the renunciation of the cloister without the bars, but there were the same exactions, the departures at a given order, and the annual return to the Retreat to be again inspired by Jesus.

Sometimes, in her journeyings, the *Worker* met some good man, and gave up preaching for wifehood. One, and one only, ran away with the

money intended for her expenses, — her own maintenance and the purchase of souls. But, in general, they were devoted to the cause, expending all their energies on one single aim. They were mystical to ecstasy, even to that preaching and prophesying madness so often seen in women of the Reformed Church, and which sometimes spreads as an epidemic over a whole people, as it did in Sweden thirty years ago, when all the public places and country roads were thronged with visionaries and prophetesses.

Among the *Workers* of Mme. Autheman, pretty girls like Éline Ebsen were rare. Almost all were old, sickly, and deformed, the refuse of celibacy, waifs upon the sea of poverty, who were happy to have some place of refuge, and to devote to the God of the Evangelist that which man had disdained. This was, in fact, the sole utility of that *Work*, so little in harmony with the French nature that it would have been almost laughable, but for the heart-breaks and tears of which it was too frequently the cause. Watson, the lighthouse-keeper, did not laugh, I assure you, all alone in his watch-tower, when he thought: "Where is she? What is to become of the children?" Neither did she laugh, the hostess of the Affameur, her life filled with mourning, as she sobbed over her furnace, in the midst of all the gayeties of the public-house, her husband in a mad-house, her daughter dead.

Poor little Damour, so pretty, so good! Mme. Autheman had taken her to her schools, and had then shut her up in the Retreat, with the consent

of the mother, who did not understand very clearly what was intended. The sermons, the dismal music, the talk of death, always death, as a hope, as a threat, soon overwhelmed in consuming melancholy that growing nature, accustomed to the free life of the open air. The child said: "I am tired . . . I want to go home. . ." Anne de Beuil scolded her, terrorized her, and prevented her from going out.

Then, suddenly, the neophyte fell into a strange state of prostration, interrupted by crises of nervous excitement, when she saw visions that revealed to her the mysteries of heaven and hell, the punishment of the damned, the joy of the Elect seated at the Divine table. She was by turns overwhelmed with ecstatic delight or plunged with chattering teeth into an abyss of terror. The peasant girl preached and prophesied, raising in the bed her wasted body, convulsed with internal suffering and with shrieks that filled the park.

"I heard her screams from the outside," said the wretched mother, who was forbidden to come into the room, under the pretext that all emotion was dangerous for the sick girl. When her daughter was no longer conscious, she was allowed to enter. The death agony had then commenced, with dumb lips, set teeth, and an extraordinary dilatation of the pupils that suddenly enlightened the physician as to the cause of this strange death. She must have gathered belladonna berries in the park and eaten them, mistaking them for cherries.

"As if my child did not know cherries . . ." cried the mother in exasperation, and, in spite of the doctor's opinion, in spite of the report of the Procureur of Corbeil, a masterpiece of judicial irony and nice persiflage, she remained convinced that her child had been killed by drugs which had been administered to put her in an ecstatic condition. This was, also, the general opinion among the country-people; and it gave a bad name to that mysterious chalet, which in winter could be seen from afar through the leafless branches of the bare woods.

But on this day the Retreat, in the midst of the brilliant lawn, roseate and gleaming in the sunlight, in the silence and splendor of the summer afternoon, had about it nothing of gloom and disaster, and made on Éline a mystical impression of comfort which could be defined in three words: sweetness, rest, and light. Oh! above all, sweetness. She heard faint voices of women in accents of invocation, strains from the organ mingled with the shrill cries of the locusts in the grass, and the buzz of winged creatures whirring upward toward the azure. Before the door a small, hunchbacked woman was noiselessly sweeping the steps.

"It is Chalmette," said Jeanne, softly, beckoning the *Worker* to approach.

After enduring a thousand insults, Chalmette had returned from Creuzot. In the evening the miners came in crowds to hear her preach, bringing herrings and bottles with them, calling out to

her familiarly, and drowning her voice by singing snatches from the *Marseillaise.* The women, especially, were infuriated against her, insulting her when she went on the street, and throwing coal and ashes at her, without the slightest feeling of pity for her deformity. Nevertheless, she was ready to begin again.

"Whenever you wish, whenever you wish," she said gently; but in the cripple's delicate face with its pointed chin, and in the long hands visible beneath her cape, and grasping the broom that was taller than herself, trembled an extraordinary will-power.

"They are all like that," said Mme. Autheman, as she ascended the outer stairway of the chalet, and made Éline sit down beside her on the veranda formed by the projecting roof, "all of them. But I have only twenty; and thousands are needed to save the world."

Becoming animated at this thought of the redemption of the world, she went on to explain the aim and meaning of the *Work*, and her desire to enlarge its scope. Their efforts were confined at present to France, but she proposed to extend them to Germany, Switzerland, and England, where minds are better disposed toward Liberal religion. Watson had gone, others would follow.

She stopped, fearing she had said too much; but Éline was not listening to her. As often happens in decisive moments, she had withdrawn within herself, absorbed in an ineffable and lofty contemplation which soothed and carried her

away. Before the veranda, on the top of a willow, a bird was singing, balanced on the end of a branch which bent under the slight weight. That bird was her soul.

"It is finished, then, entirely finished?"

Mme. Autheman had taken both of Éline's hands within hers, and was questioning her.

"It was the point on which we agreed, was it not? The child's communion. That is well, very well. Evidently, the father would not consent. Letters were left unanswered, no more lessons for Fanny? I understand perfectly."

But while Éline told how she had resisted the snares of the Evil One, told of the little girl's appeals, with her hands outstretched in despair, tears came into her eyes, as they had done at breakfast that morning.

"I loved her so much, if you only knew! She was as dear as if she had been my own child. The sacrifice has been great."

"Why do you speak of sacrifices? Christ will require others, and still more terrible ones from you."

Éline Ebsen bowed her head, shivering under that relentless voice, but she dared not ask what more Christ could require of her.

XI.

AN ABDUCTION.

"THE train! I am here in time . . ." exclaimed Mme. Ebsen, all out of breath, as, burdened with umbrellas and a pair of overshoes wrapped in a newspaper, she stopped at the entrance gate of the station just as the six o'clock train rolled in.

She was comfortably at home, setting the table for dinner, when a storm, the last one of the summer, suddenly burst forth in streams of rain. She remembered that her daughter had left for Port-Sauveur that morning in a light gown and thin shoes, such as all Parisian ladies wore at that season. Hurrying out of the house, she had thrown herself, puffing and blowing, into an omnibus that went to the Orléans Station. Now she waited, leaning against the railing, and trying to distinguish Éline's hat or a tress of her blond hair among that crowd of hurried, frightened people, all carrying baskets or bouquets, with dripping umbrellas, and wet, bedraggled garments, jostling one another in their efforts to be the first to reach the coaches, with indistinct cries of "Take the dog . . . carry the child. . . ."

But in vain did she bend toward the gate, stand on tiptoes, peer through the iron grating, or look

over the shoulder of a customs officer, all the way down the platform where a long line of empty, shining cars were standing. Éline's black hat was not to be seen. At first the mother was not alarmed, attributing the delay to the sudden deluge. She was confident that her daughter would arrive on the next train; only she would be a little late, for from now until eight o'clock there was no train but the express, and that did not stop at Ablon. Cheerfully she resigned herself to the situation, and began to walk up and down the deserted waiting-room, where the flame of the gas that had just been lighted flickered in the damp wind, and was reflected on the wet pavements of the court. At one moment the whistle of the express caused a commotion in the station, with a stamping of feet, and a noise of voices and rolling trucks; then all was again quiet, but for the echo of her slow footsteps, the dripping of the interminable rain, or behind the glazed windows the rustling of the leaves of a large folio, or some invisible mouse that noisily made its presence known.

Mme Ribon grew tired of waiting in this way, with an empty stomach and cold feet, and to console herself for her long sentry, thought that by and by they would be back in their snug little nest, sitting opposite each other, before a good warm "beer soup." Eight o'clock! More whistling, and hissing from the locomotive, shaking the platform as it dashed into the station. The gates are thrown open, and still no Éline. Without doubt, they had kept her at the château; her

mother would certainly find a telegram waiting for her on her return. All the same, when Mme. Autheman knew how tenderly and closely attached they were to each other, it was not nice of her, it was not *chaudi;* Éline ought not to have yielded. The poor woman scolded to herself all the way home in the rain, as she paddled through pools of water, traversing those long avenues that lead from the station to the Val-de-Grâce, with their five-story buildings of new plaster and black holes for windows.

"You have a despatch for me, Mother Blot?"

"No, Madame, there is only the paper. But how does it happen that you are all alone?"

She had not the strength to reply, beset as she was with a thousand terrors that entered her mind at the same time. Éline must be ill. But in that case she would have been informed, if that château had human beings for inhabitants. . . . Should she start at once, and make the journey at night, in such weather? It would be better to wait until morning. What a dreary evening it was! It recalled their return from the burial of Grandmother. There was the same sensation of emptiness and loneliness, but with the difference that now it was Éline who was absent, and that Mme. Ebsen was alone, entirely alone, to bear her sorrow and recurring anxieties.

There was no light in the Lories' windows. After he had sent Sylvanire and the children to the lock, the poor man did not return until very late in the evening, for, since the young girl's decision to

reply to none of his letters, not even the one in which he submitted to her wishes and accepted her Orthodox conditions for himself and his children, he had avoided a neighborhood that had become painful to him. And now Mme. Ebsen, who had not been down to the Lories' for two months, felt a sudden twinge of remorse for having so readily abandoned that excellent man at the capricious severity of Éline. It is only in suffering that one can discern suffering, even though unavowed, in another.

She did not lie down all night, and kept her lamp burning, counting the hours, and listening to every noise, hearkening to the approach of the infrequent carriages that passed her door, with the foolish hopes and feverish superstitions that come with waiting.

"The third one to pass will stop at the door . . ." But that one drove on, as all the others did, until dawn, when the noisy wheels of the milk-wagons began to rattle by. Then, with the usual reaction that succeeds a sleepless night, she threw herself back in her chair, and fell into such a sleep as follows a death watch, — a real syncope of intoxication, with mouth open, and features swollen; from which she was aroused by several violent pulls at the bell, accompanied by the energetic calls of Mother Blot:

"Mame Ebsen . . . Mame Ebsen . . . it has just come. I am sure it is from your young lady."

In the pale light that flooded the little *salon*, she

ran to pick up the envelope that had been pushed under the door. Éline had written. She was not ill. What could it be, then? This is what she read:

My dear Mother, — In the fear of afflicting you, I have shrunk until now from telling you of a resolution on which my heart has been for a long time determined. But the hour has sounded. God calls me, and I am going to him. When this letter reaches you, I shall be far away. Whether our separation, which will last during my days of probation, shall be long, I know not, but I shall take care to send you news of myself, and to furnish you the opportunity to write to me. Rest assured that I shall not forget you, and that I shall pray the merciful Saviour that he may bless you, and give you his peace, according to the promises of his love.

Your devoted daughter,

Éline Ebsen.

At first she did not understand, and read it all again, aloud, slowly, sentence by sentence, to the signature . . . Éline — it was Éline who had written that, her child, her little Lina. . . . Nonsense! And yet the writing, although somewhat unsteady, was much like that of her daughter. . . . Yes, those imbeciles down there had held her hand, and had dictated those monstrous words, of which she did not mean a syllable. From where did the letter come? The postmark of Petit-Port, *parbleu!* Éline was still there, and her mother would have only to hasten to her to change that horrible resolution. . . . All the same, it was most cruel and malicious to wish to take her child from

her, her adored Linette. . . . She made it a business, then, this Madame Autheman, to break people's hearts. But she would see about that, indeed!

All these thoughts, ejaculated aloud, or expressed only by angry gestures, came into her mind while making her preparations to leave, hastily rearranging her hair, and bathing her face, tear-stained and swollen after a sleepless night. Having bought a ticket, and taken her place in the car, she became somewhat more composed, and calmly considered the treacherous and progressive snares by which her daughter had been enveloped, from the first visit of Anne de Beuil, whose curious questions she recalled as to the people they knew in Paris, — to assure herself, doubtless, that they could manœuvre with impunity, — to the prayer-meeting in the Avenue des Ternes, when her daughter was put on the platform beside that mad woman, — oh, the horror of it! — even to the last question Mme. Autheman had asked, when she came to secure Éline for her schools: "You love your child dearly, Madame?" She remembered the perfidious, cold tone in which the pretty, rigid mouth had asked the question.

But how was it that she had not seen it all sooner? How blind, how weak she had been! For, after all, it was she herself who had been the cause of all the trouble. Those translations, those religious ravings, with which they had slowly intoxicated her child, Éline had cared no more for than she had desired to be present at that prayer-

meeting. It was the mother who had wished it, from motives of interest or from vanity, and to be associated with such rich people as the Authemans. Ah! stupid, stupid! . . . And she cursed her folly, and called herself by the harshest of names.

Ablon!

She left the car without recognizing the station, without remembering the delightful party they had all had there in the spring. So wonderfully are places transformed by our personal feelings, for it is, after all, through the medium of our own eyes that we form our impressions of things and people! The only distinct idea that came to her was that Éline went from the station to Port-Sauveur in an omnibus. She made inquiry, and was informed that no omnibus came to meet this train; but some one pointed out to her the cross-road that led directly to the château, a short walk of half an hour.

The weather was mild and balmy, with a white mist rising from the ground, soaked by the deluge of the night before. By noon it would either condense into rain, or dissipate under the rays of the sun.

Walking at first beside the walls of the estate, she could see through the massive gates, placed at intervals along the way, green lawns, blossoming flower vases, and rows of orange-trees planted before the veranda, — a vision of summer that danced and gleamed in the fog, and was suggestive of the diaphanous dresses worn by fair Parisiennes the evening before. But now Mme. Ebsen suddenly

found herself in the open country; hillsides covered with vineyards and beet-fields, broad ploughed spaces, over which hovered flocks of crows, fields of potatoes, in which she could distinguish sacks filled and placed in heaps, and the dim outlines of men and women crouched near the ground, making the same hazy, indistinct spots in the white mist.

The mother was overwhelmed by the gloom of her surroundings, as by some physical oppression, which increased as she drew near Port-Sauveur, the red roofs and immense shade-trees of which she could distinguish half-way up the hill. After having skirted a seemingly interminable park, its walls overhung with ivy and Virginia creeper, crimsoning in the autumn sun, she passed the railroad at a level crossing, and found herself on the bank of the Seine, in front of the château. There was the half-moon of turf with its iron chains before the entrance, the long house, and that monumental grating masked by closed Venetian blinds, through which she tried to discover something besides the tops of the trees. She was, indeed, there.

She pulled the bell faintly, then again, and during the time that it took for some one to open the door, she prepared her introductory speech, which should be brief and polite. But when the door was opened, she forgot everything, and rushing forward, gasped:

"My daughter! where is she? . . . At once . . . I wish to see her. . . .'

The valet, in his working apron, and with the silver P. S. embossed on the collar of his black coat, replied, as he had been ordered to do, that Mlle. Éline had left the château the evening before; and upon a gesture of furious denial, added:

"However, Madame is within . . . if Madame would like to speak to her."

Behind him, she traversed passage-ways, a balcony, and ascended a flight of stairs, without seeing where she was going, and found herself in a small green *salon*, where Mme. Autheman, calm and erect, was writing at her desk. The sight of the familiar face, and the gentle, impressive smile, softened her anger.

"Ah! Madame, Madame . . . Lina . . . this letter . . . What does it all mean?"

And she burst into convulsive sobs, which shook and weakened her stout, pitiable body. Mme. Autheman believed she could easily bring this weak, tearful person to reason, and seating herself on the divan beside her, spoke with her usual gentleness and unction:

"Come, you should not grieve in this way, but you should rather rejoice and bless the Saviour, who has condescended to enlighten his child, and to draw her soul from the black sepulchre. . . ."

This mystic healing, applied to the quivering heart, more than ever human, affected it like a red-hot iron. The mother drew away, and with dry eyes rose:

"All those are but words. . . . My child . . . I wish to see her. . . ."

"Éline is no longer here," exclaimed Mme. Autheman, with a sigh of sadness before this sacrilegious rebellion.

"Then tell me where she is. I insist upon knowing where my daughter is."

With perfect calmness, for she was accustomed to this sort of explanation, the President explained that Éline Ebsen had left France, with the intention of spreading the Gospel in other lands, perhaps in England, perhaps in Switzerland, — it was not yet fully determined. In any case, Éline would send her mother news of herself, and she would always cherish toward her the sentiments of a devoted Christian daughter.

It was Éline's letter over again, in almost the exact words, slowly, composedly detailed, in a tone of unchanging mildness, that threw Mme. Ebsen into a rage, into an almost murderous paroxysm of fury, as she looked upon this woman, correct in demeanor, her well-fitting black gown bringing out all the pallor of the slender cheeks and prominent forehead. The large, limpid eyes, almost without pupils, had in them all the coldness and hardness of stone, and were devoid of all tenderness and feminine pity.

"Oh! I shall certainly strangle her," she thought. But her hands, clasped convulsively, were extended in entreaty.

"Mme. Autheman, give me back my little Lina . . . I have only her in the world. If she leaves me, there is nothing more. . . . *Mon Dieu!* How happy we were together! . . . You have

seen our little home, so well cared for, so neat . . . no chance to sulk there. It was not large enough for anything but embraces."

Sobs shook her like a tempest, choked her, drowned her supplications. She asked but one thing, — to see her child, and speak to her; then, if all this were true, if Lina herself said so, she would yield; indeed she would, she promised it.

An interview! This was precisely what Jeanne could not permit. To convince the mother, she preferred to quote extracts from sermons, and pious phrases from her little books: *Consolation in Jesus . . . Affliction which disposes to Prayer.* And becoming gradually moved by her own words, she cried:

"But it is you, wretched woman, it is your soul that Éline wishes to save; and your deep sorrow is the beginning of salvation."

Mme. Ebsen listened, her eyes on the ground, but heart and mind on the defensive. Suddenly with the firmness of one who has come to a decision, she burst out:

"Very well! You will not give me back my Lina . . . I mean to appeal to the law. We shall see whether such abominations are allowed."

In spite of these threats, by which she was scarcely moved, Mme. Autheman herself walked with her as far as the veranda, and ordered a servant to accompany her the rest of the distance, as majestic, as unfeeling, all the while, as destiny. Half-way down the avenue, the mother turned, and stopped a moment on the terrace, where her

daughter had walked yesterday, perhaps even this very morning. She glanced over the great, silent park, dominated by the white stone cross standing out through the fog like the pinnacle of a cemetery.

Oh! to dash into those dense woods, towards that cavern of death in which she was sure her daughter was buried alive, to burst open the door, and rush in with a great and terrible cry, "Lina!" to take her in her arms, carry her far away, and restore her to life . . . these thoughts flashed like lightning through the poor brain. Then a feeling of shame held her back, and the knowledge of her impotency, in the presence of all this luxury and orderliness with which, in spite of her trouble, she was impressed. Justice! Her only recourse was justice.

Resolute and determined, she went directly toward the village, having decided on her plan, a very simple one. She would see the Mayor, make her complaint, and return with a gendarme, a rural guard, some one who would see that her child was restored to her, who would compel that wicked woman to confess what she had done with her. She never doubted the success of her undertaking, and even asked herself whether, before entering upon such decided measures, she had done her best in the employment of conciliatory means. Yes, she had wept, she had entreated with clasped hands, but a deaf ear had been turned to her. So much the worse for the woman! That would teach that kidnapper a lesson.

In the one street of the village, along which cottages stood at regular intervals, with their little gardens drawn out before them like the drawers of a bureau, not a soul was stirring. Everybody must have been in the fields, for it was harvest time. As the poor mother proceeded on her way, from time to time a curtain would be lifted, a dog would come out to sniff at the stranger; but the curtain was dropped immediately, the dog did not bark. Nothing disturbed this gloomy silence, that reminded one of a barracks or penitentiary.

On an elevation, shaded by old elms in quincuncial forms, stood the temple, flanked by two Evangelical schools, shining, even under the cloudy sky, with the reflection of their newly whitened stone. Before the high, half-opened windows of the girls' school, Mme. Ebsen stopped to listen to a tumult of little piping voices, reciting rhythmically, without a pause: "Who-in-the-Heav-en-can-be-compared-un-to-the-Lord? Who-a-mong-the-sons-of-the-might-y-can-be-lik-ened-un-to-the-Lord?" accompanied by the taps of a ruler on the table to indicate the quickening or the retarding of the reading.

Suppose she should go in!

This is where Éline gave her lessons. Perhaps she might learn something there. Who knows, even, if she might not find her within, conducting her class, as usual? She pushed open the door, and between four white walls covered with Bible texts, she saw crouched before the desks several long rows of black pinafores, with little black caps

drawn over the sunburnt peasant faces. At the far end of the room a tall young woman, sallow and bloated, presided, a Bible in one hand, a long ferule in the other. On seeing Mme. Ebsen enter, she advanced, and at the interruption of the lesson every young head was raised with curiosity.

"I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle. I am Lina's Mamma."

"Continue!" cried the frightened Mlle. Hammer, to the children, in as loud a voice as her humble tones would allow. And the whole class continued in unison: "O-Lord-God-of-Hosts." . . . Certainly poor Hammer must have been terribly confused to be so animated, and to drive Mme. Ebsen back toward the door, answering every one of her questions with her doleful, disconsolate "M-n-yes, m-n-yes," in which was evident all the despair and humiliation she felt on account of the baleful adventure of Adam and Eve under the apple-tree, so many thousands of years ago.

"Do you know my daughter?"

"M-n-yes."

"Is not this where she taught?"

"M-n-yes."

"Is it true that she has gone away? Oh, tell me! Have pity."

"M-n-yes, m-n-yes. I know nothing. . . inquire at the château."

And this timid creature, who nevertheless had the grip of an Ignorantine, pushed the mother out of the door, and closed it on her, while the class

with furious energy continued to recite: "For-the-ways-of-the-Lord-are-right-and-the-just-shall-walk-in-them."

On the other side of the street was seen the tri-colored flag that indicated the Mayor's office, and on the gray walls, in large black letters, R. F., which Mme. Autheman had not yet dared to replace by her P. S. On the lower floor, behind a window, a stout man, with pallid, beadle-like face, was writing. He was the Mayor's secretary; but Mme. Ebsen wished to speak with the Mayor.

"He is not in," said the man, without turning his head.

"At what hour can he be seen?"

"Every day from six to seven, at the château."

"At the chateau? Why, then he is . . ."

"Yes, M. Autheman."

There was nothing to hope for in this quarter Then she thought of the Curé, who must be their enemy, and who would give her, certainly, either advice or assistance. She inquired where he lived, and hastened at once toward the river bank. On the way she saw a small omnibus being harnessed in front of an office, which bore the sign: *Railway Transfer, Carriages to hire.* She approached the driver, and asked if he knew a beautiful young girl, tall, a blonde, who was dressed in deep mourning; and to quicken the peasant's memory, slipped into his hand a piece of silver. Did he know her? He rather thought he did. It was he who drove her three times a week.

"Did you drive her yesterday? and this morn-

a religion where criticism and inquiry are allowed, a religion devoid of discipline, into which everybody may enter, as into a mill, and believe what he pleases! He may even, if that amuses him, play at being a priest. Besides, consider the medley of sects, of beliefs!

He became animated, for his heart was hot against Lutherans and Calvinists, and he was proud to display his erudition on a subject to which he had given special study during the leisure hours which his small parish allowed. He began to enumerate the countless sects that, besides the great divisions of Liberals and Orthodox, severed the Reformed Church.

"Count them," he said, raising one after another his fat fingers, which from contact with the oars and the net were covered with callus. "You have the Irvingites, who wish to return to the primitive ideas of the Apostolic age; the Sabbatarians, demanding a Sabbath like that of the Jews; the Pelagians, whose religion consists in striking their breasts violently with their fists; the Darbyites, who rebel against all ecclesiastical organization and accept no intermediary between their pride and God; the Methodists, the Wesleyans, the Mormons, the Anabaptists, the Howlers, the Tremblers, and gracious knows how many more!"

The poor woman listened, dumfounded, to this theological nomenclature; and, as if all these sects stood up as so many barriers between her daughter and herself, she pressed her hand over her eyes, and murmured: "My child! my child!"

in accents so heartrending that the priest was touched, and abandoned his constraint.

"But, Madame, of course there are laws. You must go to Corbeil, and there make your complaint to the public prosecutor. I know you have a difficult task before you, and several years ago, in a case in which the circumstances were similar to yours, even after the inquiry had begun. . . . But that was under the government of the Sixteenth of May, and you will doubtless be more fortunate under a truly Republican régime."

He emphasized the last words with a certain malice that changed the expression of his chubby features.

"Is it far, — Corbeil?" asked the mother, hastily.

No; Corbeil was not far. She had only to follow the river bank as far as Juvisy, from which place the train would take her there in twenty minutes.

She started on her journey along the narrow road in the direction of Juvisy, whose white houses she might have distinguished grouped together at the turn which the Seine makes at that point, if the fog, which was thicker than ever, had not prevented her from seeing anything fifty feet away.

The river lay motionless beneath the fog, and seemed congealed between the trees, whose indistinct forms were vaguely outlined along the banks. From time to time she saw a wherry anchored in the water, with the silhouette of a fisherman sitting erect, fishing-pole in hand. The silence was over-

whelming; the very air seemed to be filled with expectation and with anguish which weighed upon the already exhausted mother, for she had eaten nothing since the night before. Faint, sore, and weakened by tears, she slipped with every step she trod along the unfrequented road, full of weeds and mud.

Her thoughts proved no less wearisome than her journey, for, like a disobedient child, they ran ahead of her a dozen times, always returning to start again. She was already picturing to herself her entrance into the Procureur's presence, what he would say, and what she would reply. Then, suddenly remembering that she was here alone, splashing through this muddy, deserted road, going in search of gendarmes, that they might forcibly restore her child to her arms, she was overcome with an immense discouragement. Of what use were judges and soldiers, since her daughter no longer loved her? She repeated, word for word, the dreadful letter that she had re-read so often since the morning: "*God calls me. I am going to him. Your devoted daughter.*"

Lina! her devoted! . . No, there are things impossible to believe. . . Then, as she thought of Éline's ingratitude, she recalled all that she had done for her, — how she had sat up through the long nights and had toiled for her, that she might lack nothing, that she might receive a good education and be brought up as a lady. She herself had gone in patches and old clothes, so that the child might have an entirely new outfit when she

went away to school. . . . And when, after so many privations and anxieties, Éline had grown up, beautiful, well-educated, and charming, ah, yes, *si chandille . . . "God calls me. I am going to him!"*

Her limbs gave way under her. She was compelled to stop and rest on a pile of reddish stones that had been placed there for building purposes, among the nettles and tall grasses, some of them holding the rain in their green calyxes. They looked like cups of poison. She placed her feet on a landing plank, the end of which slanted down into the river. It offered an easy, comfortable descent to her weariness and despair. But she did not think of this for an instant, for a sudden, terrible idea had taken possession of her mind.

What if that woman had spoken the truth! What if it were really God who had taken her child, who had committed this act of robbery! For, of course, this Jeanne Autheman was no magician, and to have the power to infatuate grown girls as she did, girls twenty years of age, required some supernatural aid. Fragments of sermons that she had heard, phrases from religious books, suddenly took on, in her troubled mind, a new significance and became Biblical threats . . . "*Love not.*". . . "*He who shall leave father and mother.*" But then, against God nothing could prevail. What was she going to seek at Corbeil? Justice? . . . Against God! . . .

Crouched on her heap of stones, silently watching the Seine, oily and heavy, studded here and

there with broad, bright patches, she was no longer conscious of anything but a bubbling, a dull rumbling of all those confused ideas in the poor brain, like water in a steaming caldron. It was raining now, — a fine, penetrating rain, confusing sky and water in an indistinguishable mass. . . . She tried to rise, to continue her journey, but river, trees, everything, seemed to be whirling around her, and she sank into the wet, muddy grass, with eyes closed, and arms motionless by her side.

XII.

ROMAIN AND SYLVANIRE.

AND still there is this rumbling of the caldron, but it is nearer and louder, quite close to her. Finally, her head is relieved, and the ringing in her ears has ceased. She opens her eyes, and is astonished to see neither the river bank nor the pile of stones. What means this big bed in which she is lying, and this room, where the light filters through the yellow curtains, and shadows flicker in waves upon the walls and ceiling, as they do in houses close to the river? Mme. Ebsen has surely seen before this carpet with the roses spread over it, and this ingenuous display of magazine illustrations on the walls; but she quickly finds her bearings when she hears under her window the whistles and shouts of "Hello! Romain!" rising above the noise of the foaming waters along by the sluices, and over yonder catches a glimpse of a fair-haired little girl, wearing the smock-frock of a peasant, who peeps through the opening of the door, and then runs away, calling, in Fanny's own voice:

"Sylvanire, she is awake. . . ."

And there they are, both Sylvanire and Fanny, installed by her bedside; and it revives the poor mother to see that loyal face, and to feel the warm,

silken hair of the child pressed against her cheek. But, *mon Dieu*, what does it all mean? How did she come here? Sylvanire knows scarcely more than herself. Yesterday, as he was returning from catechism class, Maurice had found Mme. Ebsen, lying, as if dead, on the tow-path. "An attack of apoplexy," the physician from Ablon had said; he had to bleed her twice, and knew at once, by the way the blood spirted, that it could be nothing else. Nevertheless, Sylvanire had telegraphed at once to Mlle. Éline. This was convenient at the lock, for there is a telegraph instrument in the house.

Romain's wife stops speechless, as she sees Mme. Ebsen sobbing and burying in the pillows her face whiter than their linen covers. The name of Éline has again awakened her despair, suddenly aroused and vigorous, after the brief sleep of the sick brain.

"No more Éline — gone — Madame Autheman."

From these disconnected cries, Sylvanire unravels the catastrophe. It causes her no astonishment. This is not the first time that the lady of Port-Sauveur has done a wicked deed like this; she has bewitched this child, just as she did the Damour's and the Gelinot's, "by giving her something to drink, blessed Lady!"

"Something to drink? Do you think so?" asks the mother, who desires nothing better than to believe this legend, which would attach to the Authemans all the responsibility of their crime.

"I am quite sure of it. . . . If not, how can you

explain it? But don't be troubled, Madame Ebsen, happy days will return again. Your young lady shall be restored to you. Only, you need not look for any assistance here; these Authemans . . . well, they are kings here in the country. You must go to Paris, and see and get people interested there. Monsieur Lorie knows the ministers, he will appeal to them. It will not be long until you have her with you again. . . ."

This straightforward way of looking at it, this simple and sincere cordiality, transfuses new hope and courage into the veins of the mother. She thinks of their rich and influential friends, of the d'Arlots, the Baroness. She will go to them all, and there will be a rising of indignation against this wicked woman. But for Sylvanire, she would get up and start at once. But the doctor ordered a few days of rest, under the penalty of a relapse. Come! she must be reasonable, for her child's sake.

But how endless seemed the long convalescence, and how cruel the hours of waiting in the bed-chamber at the lock! She measured the time by the regular passage of the Chain; she counted the barges and rafts, moving sleepily down the stream with the current, their pilots in white caps, bending over their long paddles. In the evening a red light, that was doubled by its reflection in the water, illuminated the bow of the rafts. She watched this light become dimmer and dimmer in the fog, and travelled with it, thinking:

"Now they are at Ablon, . . . now at Port-à-l'Anglais, . . . now at Paris. . . ." In the devouring

activity of her thoughts, the water, these people, these boats threading their course with uniform slowness, exasperated her, and seemed to mock at her weakness. She divided her convalescence into stages, — so many days in bed, so many in the chair, a few steps about the house to gain a little strength, — and then she would be off! It was the feverish eagerness of the prisoner who sees the end of his term of punishment at hand.

Nevertheless, she was much petted at the lock. Romain, who was overflowing with joy to have his wife with him for his very own, out of regard for the poor mother denied himself the pleasure of singing and laughing; and when he softly entered the room to lay on her dresser one of those immense bouquets of reeds, iris, and water-plumes, such as he alone knew how to make, he prepared himself before entering this chamber of mourning by trying to think of something sad; suppose that Sylvanire should be ill, or that Monsieur should send for her to come back to Paris with the children. . . . But his constrained movements, his little eyes hypocritically cast down, his "Bless' pig, Madame Ebsen," which he stammered out meaninglessly, irritated and annoyed Sylvanire, who sent him out at once, to dissipate in the fresh air the intoxication caused by his happiness, which was, like all great happiness, selfish.

It was with little Fanny that the mother was most contented. With her little work the child would sit beside her, and never wearied of hearing about Éline.

"Did you not love her very much?" or "You wanted her for your Mamma, I am sure?" And in the soft touch of those fresh young cheeks she felt that she had found again something of her daughter's caresses, some trace of her dainty hand, in the one that stroked her fine hair. At other times, seeing the transformation in the child, the coarse handkerchief awkwardly arranged about her neck, the little cap and sabots, her little hands reddened and chilled like autumn apples, she felt that sadness which comes to us in the presence of a physical or moral degradation.

In the case of Maurice, this change was even more accentuated. Of the future aspirant, who had been shown off so brilliantly in the *salon* of the Sub-Prefecture, there remained only a tattered cap on a big country lad, stolid and tanned. Although still destined for Navale, he was for the present released from his studies, owing to the approach of the first Communion, and outside of his catechism class he led a delicious existence of idling down by the river bank, which was disturbed only by young Nicolas, who attacked him every time he left the house of the Curé. Oh! that Nicolas . . . He dreamed of him at night, unhappy boy, and next day related those terrible dreams to his little sister, who became indignant to see him so cowardly, him the future officer!

"If it were I, you would see!"

At the lock everybody talked of these frightful pursuits, from which Maurice always returned pale, breathless, and exhausted.

"He had better look out one of these days if I get hold of him!" said Sylvanire; but fortunately for young Nicolas, her numerous occupations kept her at home. In the first place there was the telegraph, which Romain had taught her to manipulate; then there was the cooking, her husband's linen and the children's to look after, not to speak of Baraquin's, for this renegade made a part of the family, eating and sleeping in the house. It was, therefore, very embarrassing to speak of the château and of Éline at table and in the evening. Not that Baraquin was a mischievous man, but for a bit of silver he would have sold his friends, his skin, his soul, just as readily as he had sold his Communion coats. It was for this reason that Sylvanire mistrusted him, and always waited until he was out of hearing before expressing her opinion.

Sylvanire's opinion was, that Mlle. Éline had not left the château at all, and every day she sent Romain to watch the gate from his boat on the river, while she herself inquired among the tradespeople, at the shop of the Evangelical butcher, with his: "*Die here that you may live hereafter*," or at the grocer's, with the motto: "*Place your affections on things above.*" Nowhere had the pretty young lady been seen; but they knew perfectly well, all the same, whom she meant. As for trusting one of these creatures with a letter or any commission whatever, she might as well have asked their political opinions, or for whom they intended to vote at the next election. All she could extract from them was a few meaningless words, with

winks and laughter which might be either stupid or malicious.

One evening Mother Damour came for a few moments into the lock-keeper's house. This peasant woman, with her gloomy face, her cheerless mourning, and the dull, savage resignation with which she spoke of her misfortune, filled Mme. Ebsen with terror.

"Nothing that you may do will be of any use," repeated, again and again, the hostess of the Affameur in her mournful voice, her hands outspread upon her knees. "The Authemans have *killed* my daughter, and they have shut up my husband in a madhouse. But I could do nothing. As I told the Judge, even when they wanted to put me in prison for those words, they are too rich, there is no justice against such as they!"

It was in vain that Romain told her over and over again that it was not at all the same thing, and that Mme. Ebsen would employ very influential friends, — ministers, police commissioners. Mother Damour remained unshaken in her convictions. "There is nothing to be done. . . . They are too rich." She was not allowed to return again. Mme. Ebsen, moreover, was now much better; she was up, and had taken a short walk along the shore. At the end of a week, devoured with eagerness to begin her operations, she departed.

Sylvanire was not mistaken. Éline was at the Retreat under surveillance, isolated from every

influence and danger from terrestrial ties. Mme. Autheman was preparing her for her mission; she was never left for a single moment alone or unoccupied. After the lesson in Theology by J. B. Crouzat, and the conferences of Jeanne, came religious songs, meditations, and prayers recited aloud by all the inmates. Between times she took short walks, leaning on the arm of Anne de Beuil or of Chalmette, whose ardent words uplifted her.

On account of the autumn rains that saturated the russet foliage, already become scanty, these walks were usually confined to the veranda, where, enveloped in their capacious water-proofs, the five or six *Workers* of the Retreat could be seen, their dark, muffled silhouettes adding a touch of the misery of the city to the melancholy of the woods. But for the neophyte, the most agreeable hours were those passed in the Hall for Prayer, on the ground-floor of the chalet. Here, in the semi-obscurity caused by the projection of the roof, soothed by the monotonous refrain of the hymns, she abandoned herself to a delicious hypnotism, which gradually confused her mind, already unnerved, to the verge of unconsciousness.

The preparation for prayer consisted in meditation, kneeling on the floor, with brow pressed against the wall. The whole being became absorbed, until these feminine forms stiffened in different postures,—some in attitudes of transport, or crouched down and contorted by an effort of the will; others fallen in an abandon, which gave

the illusion that nothing lay behind those shapeless garments. Suddenly she who felt herself prepared and inspired would rise and stand before the table, where, with tense and swaying form, she improvised a prayer aloud. There was little variety in these invocations, which consisted not so much of consecutive phrases as of outbursts and shouts: "Jesus! Jesus, my Saviour, my sweet and well-beloved Jesus! Glory, glory! Help me! Have pity on my poor soul!" Yet in these improvisations there was an ardor, a spontaneity of utterance, which is altogether lacking in prayers committed to memory; and the words were transfigured, as in a dream, and became glorious and radiant with light.

At such moments Éline forgot all her sorrows, and the horrible tearing asunder of her affections. Lost in God, consumed in a love that surpassed all earthly loves, a passionate tremor changed her voice, and made it stronger and more affecting. Her childish features, her gentle, blond beauty, became exalted, as she spoke; deep shadows encircled her eyes, and her tears, flowing in streams over the delicate carnation of her downy cheeks, seemed to her the true baptism of regeneration, the cleansing wave that washed away the mire of her sins.

The other *Workers*, peasant women refined by nervous disorders, experienced the same transports in their improvised prayers; but their ecstatic raptures did not beautify them, as they did Éline. The little hunchback became terrible. Her eyes

were haggard and staring, her deformed body shaken with spasmodic trembling, as her huge mouth, with frightful grimaces and contortions, called upon Jesus. She was a true convulsionist, for among religious sects hysteria is not recognized, the history of revivals and camp-meetings in England and America serving as examples. In these revivals, which are a sort of religious and preaching assembly, something like our "Jubilees," and which the Swiss call "Awakenings," these convulsive attacks are not infrequent.

"At Bristol, during the sermons of Wesley, women threw themselves back as if struck by lightning, smitten to the heart by the words of the preacher. They were seen strewn over the ground *pêle-mêle*, insensible, as if they had been corpses."[1]

And this visit to a Presbyterian church in Cincinnati:[2] "From this confused mass of human beings spread over the floor, came hysterical sounds, sobs, heavy groans, inarticulate cries, shrill and rapid. . . . One very pretty girl, kneeling before us in the attitude of Canova's Magdalen, after having uttered an incredible quantity of emotional jargon, burst into tears, and cried: "Anathema! Anathema upon Apostates! Hear, hear me, O Jesus! . . . When I was fifteen years old, my mother died, and I became a backslider. Unite me again to my mother, O Jesus, for I am very tired. Oh, John Mitchell! John Mitchell!"

[1] The History of Religious Revivals. By Dr. John Chapman. London, 1860.

[2] American Manners. By Mrs. Trollope.

It was the "revival malady," as they call it in Ireland. All the *Workers* at Port-Sauveur had attacks of the kind, but, by reason of a temperament naturally nervous, which had been overexcited by the death of her grandmother and the manœuvres of Jeanne Autheman, Éline Ebsen was more dangerously affected than the others. With her it was a veritable disease, with its periods of attack and intermittence. When in the evening she returned to her lonely little room, the child's heart again beat normally and filially. In vain did she repeat to herself that the salvation of her mother required this separation, that this test was necessary to bring her to the Cross of Jesus; in vain did she call to her aid all the verses of the Scripture; the memory of those happy days among her loved ones overwhelmed her, and prevented her from praying.

Oh! those hours without faith, without effusion, hours which are the martyrdom of devoted priests, hours when words fall frozen from lips that are dry and parched, when Saint Theresa weeps at the foot of the Cross, and, seeking to experience the emotion of the Divine Sacrifice, finds herself coldly counting the wounds which crimson the ivory — in hours like these, Mme. Ebsen appeared before her daughter, and with arms outstretched and tears streaming from her eyes, cried:

"Come back, come back; let us be happy again. What have I done to you?"

With that tormenting perception of things imparted by the darkness and one's couch, Éline saw

her mother, heard her voice calling her by name, spoke to her, sobbing, until, exhausted by the terrible struggle, she stretched out her hand, groping in the darkness for the glass that Anne de Beuil prepared for her every night, and then fell into a deep slumber, from which she awoke in the morning, without thought, without will, even without tears.

On these days she did not leave her cell, and through the mist that formed on the small latticed windows of the chalet, she watched, passing to and fro between the trees, the long waterproofs of the *Workers*, extending their arms in ecstatic gestures, or pausing in dreamy meditation, such as one sees in the inmates of La Salpêtrière. Leaves were whirling under the gloomy sky; clouds were heaped together at the same point of the horizon, accumulating, dispersing, and ending in a fine rain. She followed one of these in its transformations of light and shade,—the same one, perhaps, that her mother was watching, near by, from her invalid chair; and sometimes, by that magnetic current, that exchange of thought, so powerful between those who love each other, Éline had a presentiment of her mother's propinquity.

One morning Madame Autheman found her in tears.

"What is it now?" she asked harshly.

"My mother is ill, and near me. . . ."

"Who has told you?"

"I feel it."

During the day the President heard of Mme.

Ebsen's presence at the lock. She supposed that Éline had learned it through the indiscretion of a servant, for no people give less credence to the feelings of delicate intuition than these Orthodox believers. If the mother and daughter were to meet, there would be an end of her influence.

"You must go, Ebsen. . . . Are you ready?"

"I am ready," said poor Ebsen, trying to speak in a steady voice. Her little *Worker's* trousseau was soon in order. It was certainly a much less complicated and carefully prepared outfit than the one for which her mother had brought out her laces and most precious souvenirs; the wardrobe of a poor governess, consisting for the most part of packages of Bibles and *Morning Hours* fresh from the press and smelling strongly of printer's ink. When the carriage was ready, Anne de Beuil entered it, while Ebsen embraced Mme. Autheman, then all her companions, and Mlle. Hammer, and J. B. Crouzat, — in fact, the entire family, the only kind of family permitted a *Worker* of Port-Sauveur.

"Now go, my child, and work in my vineyard."

The carriage turned by the wall of the park, driving very slowly, because of the steep and narrow road. A little girl, coming in the opposite direction, a basket in her hand, stood aside to let the carriage pass, and looking into the window, she recognized Éline, and cried aloud: "Mamma!" A fainter cry, ending in a moan, answered hers; but the driver immediately whipped up his horse, and it started at a quicker pace. Fanny, still

clutching her basket, started to run after the carriage, with all the strength of her little legs, panting and calling all the while: "Mamma! Mamma!"

But, weighed down as she was by her coarse clothing, and the wooden shoes that deformed the little feet, she was unable to follow it, and making one last desperate effort, she fell flat. When she arose all bruised and bleeding, her hands and pretty hair soiled with mud, but without uttering a cry and still holding on to her little basket, the carriage had reached the top of the hill. For a moment the child, standing still and grave, a deep furrow wrinkling her brow, watched it disappear; then suddenly seized with fright, as if she understood, as if she divined something terrible, she ran away to the lock as fast as ever she could go.

XIII.

TOO RICH.

THE *rez-de-chaussée* of the Hôtel Gerspach, Rue Murillo. In the antechamber, gloved and in livery, stood all the lackeys, erect as gunners. The Swiss, standing by his table, pompous and haughty, answered for the twentieth time:

"Madame la Baronne is not receiving."

"But this is her day."

It was, indeed, her day; but a sudden illness . . . And at that word "illness" a jovial quiver passed over all those broad, well-shaven chins. It was the myth of the antechamber, — this skin disease, that returned with every season.

"She will be at home to me . . . the Countess d'Arlot . . . I have but a word to say."

There was the muffled sound of a bell behind the hangings, a discreet passing in and out of the well-trained servants, and almost immediately, to the astonishment of all the valets, came the order to admit the visitor, who was, nevertheless, not among the intimate friends of the family. In the *salon* on the first floor, where Mme. d'Arlot waited a few minutes, a cheerful fire was burning behind a large plate-glass, showing the park Monceau, with its English lawn, its rock-work, its little

temple shivering beneath the dark sky, the trees bare of leaves, — a Parisian winter landscape, the sadness of which rendered still more attractive this charming interior, glistening with lacquer and brasses, its ornaments, and draperies of rich Oriental coloring, its low screens placed near the windows, and its chairs comfortably grouped about the fireplace, most tempting to conversation.

Léonie, glancing around this *salon* of a Parisian woman of fashion, recalled the time when she, too, had received, had enjoyed all the elegance of her day and her house; but that was before she had become desperate and utterly discouraged with life, before she had begun to ask: "What is the use?" Now her husband was always at the Club or the Chamber, and she spent all her time at church, never receiving or making visits.

There must have been a most powerful motive to bring her to see Deborah, an old school friend, of whom she had always been very fond, in spite of the different social spheres in which the two young women lived, but whom, since her renouncement of society, she no longer saw.

"If Madame la Comtesse will take the trouble . . ."

She followed the valet into a dimly lighted room with dainty hangings. The curtains were all drawn.

"This way," said a tearful childish voice, that came from a large, high canopied bed. "Can it be really you?"

And Léonie, as soon as her eyes had become

accustomed to the obscurity, distinguished, lying in the midst of a whole paraphernalia of hand-mirrors, pencils, rabbit-paws, powder, and salve-boxes, of which the curtain of Genoa velvet made a background for a toilet worthy of an actress, the unfortunate Deborah, her auburn hair in disorder, her pale olive face — of the type of an Oriental Jewess — all daubed with salves, as also her hands, and her superb arms emerging from epaulets of lace.

"You see, it is just as it used to be at boarding-school. . . . Here I must lie for a week, and go nowhere, and see no one, with these horrible things on my skin. It came on suddenly this morning, and on my day too. . . . And to-morrow the sale at the Ambassador's for the flood sufferers of — of — something or other. And my dress home from Véroust. . . . You may imagine how unhappy I am!"

Tears ran down her cheeks, washing off the ointment and showing the red splashes, insignificant enough, in fact, but extremely wounding to the vanity of this pretty woman of the world. What had she not endured to be cured of them! Louèche, Pougues, mud-baths of Saint-Amand. "Yes, I would lie for five hours buried up to my neck in warm black mud, with water trickling over my skin, like creeping animals. But it was of no use. . . . It is in the blood, it is hereditary. . . . The Autheman gold, as that vulgar Clara used to say. . . ."

Léonie recognized the same Deborah as of the

old days at de Bourlon's,—the tall, amiable girl, with very little brains under her tawny hair; she was like a bell on a clown's hat, just as pretty, as empty, and as gushing as in the days of the infirmary.

"But here I am . . . weeping and complaining, instead of asking about yourself. . . . Such an age since we met. . . . Are you a little happier than you used to be?"

"No," answered Mme. d'Arlot, simply.

"Still the same trouble?"

"The same."

"Oh! I can understand, you poor dear! If such a thing should happen to me,—I don't mean with the Baron, because the Baron . . , but some one else whom I might have loved. . . . Ah! *Mon Dieu!* . . ." And holding a small hand-mirror before her face, with the end of a hare's foot she brushed away all trace of her tears.

"Fortunately, you have your religion to console you. . . ."

"Yes, I have my religion," replied the Countess, in her sad voice.

"Is it true, what Paule de Lostrande was telling me the other day, that your mother-in-law had just given you two hundred thousand francs to found an orphan asylum?"

"My mother-in-law is very good to me. . . ." She did not add that these truly royal generosities by which the old Marquise sought to efface the wrongs of her son, simply intensified the sorrow that she meant to cure.

"That poor De Lostrande! Another woman who is not happy . . ." continued Deborah, who in her despair liked to dwell on things that were sad.

"You heard about her husband's death, by falling from a horse, during the grand drill? She has never been able to console herself, you know . . . but, in order to forget, she has her punctures. Yes, she has become . . . what do you call it? a morphine fiend; there is quite a little society of them. When they meet, each of the ladies brings her little silver case with the needle and poison, and then, before you know it, they have put it in their arms and legs. It does not put them to sleep, but it makes them comfortable. . . . Unfortunately, the effect wears off each time, and they have to increase the dose."

"As it is with me and my prayers," murmured Léonie; and suddenly in a despairing tone: "No, you see, the only thing that really matters is to be loved. . . . Ah! if my husband had wished . . ."

She stopped short, almost as much astonished as her friend at that cry of distress, that secret confession which compelled her for a moment to bury her eyes in her hands.

"Dear creature!" exclaimed Deborah, with an affectionate gesture, which suddenly reminded her of the coating on her uncovered arms; she remembered her own misery. "Ah! life is not gay. One sees unhappiness all about one. Have you heard what has happened to our poor Mother Ebsen?"

At the name of Ebsen, Léonie quickly brushed away her tears.

"It is on her account that I have come." She became more animated.

"Just imagine . . . they will not even tell her where her child is. Why, that Jeanne Autheman is a monster."

"She is not the least changed since we knew her at school. Do you remember her pretty face, her punctilious, precise manner, the little Bible she used to carry in her apron bib where we wore our watches? Why, she actually turned my head for a little while, and I was ready to go to Africa with her. Can you imagine me a missionary among the negroes?"

It was, indeed, difficult to picture her in that vocation, as she now appeared, with her ointments, and her pencils that she drew slowly and caressingly across her statue-like throat.

"But your cousin Autheman, what does he say? Why does he allow such atrocities to be committed? It is perfectly harrowing to hear that poor mother tell her story . . . you have not heard her then? The details are incredible. Wait, she is below in my carriage. She did not dare to come in, supposing that you had visitors; but if you wish. . ."

"No, no, I pray you . . ." cried Deborah, panic-stricken. "The Baron has forbidden me from interfering in this affair."

"The Baron? And why? And I counted expressly on him, and your *salon*, and that Cheminneau, who is always here. . . ."

"No, my dear, I beg of you. . . . You do not

know what it means at the bank to have Autheman against you. One would be absolutely ruined, shattered like glass. . . . But why not ask your husband? He is a Deputy now, and a Deputy of the Opposition can obtain anything he wishes."

"I can ask nothing of my husband . . ." said the Countess, rising to go. Deborah retained her for a moment, only for form's sake; for the weak creature was afraid of an argument in which she knew in advance that she would be worsted. But she was especially afraid that some one would see Mme. Ebsen in her courtyard, before her door.

"I am exceedingly sorry, I assure you . . . both for you and for this poor woman. . . . But you will come and see me again, will you not? Good-bye, my dear. . . . And to think that I cannot even kiss you. . . ."

She fell back in her bed, seized with another paroxysm of despair, and lay there in her showy invalid apparel, her white chest and arms visible among the satins and laces, without a motion, without a tear, but uttering inarticulate moans, like one of those wonderful dolls given as New Year's presents.

As she noiselessly descended the stairs, over which was spread a carpet of delicate color with a border of plush, Léonie d'Arlot was thinking:

"If these are afraid, what will the others say?"

The affair, it seemed, was much more complicated than she had thought it awhile ago. As she stood on the steps waiting for her carriage to drive up, a name came into her mind. Yes, it was a

good idea. They could at least obtain some good counsel from him. She gave an address to the coachman, and took her seat beside Mme. Ebsen, who watched her nervously, as if she had expected her to return with Éline.

"Well?"

"Oh! the same old Deborah, you know,—a great, indolent creature. . . . In the first place she is broken out again with that eruption, and can think of nothing else. We should only lose time by talking to her. We are now going to see Raverand."

"*Raferand?*"

The Danish woman had never even heard the name of the most learned, the most subtle lawyer in Paris, twice President of the Bar Association.

"A lawyer! Is there then to be a suit?" Her eyes grew round from terror. A law-suit would take too long. It would require so much money.

Léonie reassured her: "Perhaps . . . but we shall see. He is an old friend." An old friend of her father's, the one who had persuaded her to remain with the Count to protect the honor of the family, when she saw all about her the crumbling of their happiness.

Rue Saint-Guillaume. An ancient house, one of the few that had been spared in the demolition of this corner of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and that had preserved a tradition of old France in the arch over the knocker, and the broad stone balustrade. Raverand had just arrived from the Palais, and had the Countess admitted immediately, without being shown into the *salon* where his clients

were waiting, as numerous and restless as the patients of a fashionable doctor.

"What is the matter, my dear child? No new misfortune?"

"No . . . at least not to me, . . . but to some one whom I dearly love."

She presented Mme. Ebsen, whom the lawyer, with keen, searching eyes, mutely examined. The poor mother was deeply agitated by this office, this silence, this man of law, his serious, refined head standing out in bold relief beneath the light of a lamp. Ah, dear! And now she must tell it all again, . . . so much to say for a thing so simple, so just, — merely to recover her daughter whom they have taken from her.

"Tell me your story," said Raverand, and as Mme. Ebsen was still a little deaf from her illness, he repeated in a louder tone: "Tell me your story. . . ."

She began her recital; but anger and indignation choked her. All her words wanted to come at once in all the languages that she knew, — in Danish, in German, for she could express herself most freely in these; to speak in French cost her considerable effort, for, in spite of herself, the "ch" of the North whistled through her lips, rendering even more incoherent and breathless that remarkable story. She attacked it from all sides at once . . . Her little Lina, *si chandille . . . ch . . . ch . . . ch.* She was all she had in the world. . . . Then came a jumble of Grandmother, the President, the electric clock, the prayers at three sous apiece,

the drinks they had given her little girl . . . *ch* . . . *ch* . . . *ch* . . . you understand.

"Not any too clearly!" murmured the lawyer. Léonie endeavored to speak, but he stopped her. "Let us see, Madame. Your daughter has then left your home?"

"No, no . . . not left . . . They have taken her from me, stolen her . . . her heart . . . all of my child."

"How is that? And when?"

One by one, he drew from her the details, making her recite that terrible letter, graven, as if by an indestructible mordant, into the mother's memory . . . *Your devoted daughter, Éline Ebsen.*

"And since her departure have you received any other letters?"

"Two, Monsieur, — one from London, and the last from Zurich. But she is now in neither one nor the other!"

"Show me this letter from Zurich. . . ."

She drew from her pocket her thimble, her spectacles, a photograph of her daughter, which she always carried with her, and finally the letter, which she unfolded, with her big, trembling fingers, and handed to the lawyer. He read it aloud, slowly, so as to discover its inner meaning, for this unhappy woman was beginning to interest him:

MY DEAR MOTHER, — As I hold it to be essential to give you news of myself, I will no longer delay writing to you. But I have been deeply grieved to learn that you do not hesitate to utter evasions and falsehoods . . .

Mme. Ebsen sobbed.

that you do not hesitate to accuse most unjustly those persons who have done us nothing but good. You therefore make it impossible for me to tell you where I am to be sent in the service of God, and to express to you all the respect of

Your affectionate daughter in Christ,

ÉLINE EBSEN.

After a pause: "Religious mania . . ." said Raverand, gravely. "This is a case for Bouchereau. . . ."

Mania, Bouchereau, — meaningless words these to the mother; but what she knew very well was that but for the poisons her beloved daughter had been compelled to drink, never would she have written such a letter as that. And, surprising an incredulous smile on the lips of the lawyer, she once more turned her pockets inside out, and handed him a paper written all over with chemical formulas, with the names of alkaloids, — hyoxanine, atropine, strychnine. The paper bore the stamp of one of the principal pharmacies in Paris. Since Éline's departure, she had also found in one of her drawers a box of pills and a small vial, the contents of which she had had analyzed. It contained an extract of belladonna, and a decoction made from Saint Ignatius beans, which brought on stupor and convulsions, deranging or destroying the brain.

"The devil!" exclaimed Raverand. "In the year 1880! It is monstrous. How old is your daughter?" he added, sitting erect on his chair,

his small head thrust forward, scenting a law-suit, just as a ferret on entering a burrow.

"Just past twenty . . ." answered the mother, in an accent of despair, which was rendered more lamentable still by her recollection of the splendid birthday fête. The old practitioner expressed his thought aloud:

"It is a fine case. . . ."

Léonie d'Arlot was triumphant.

"And this is not the first crime this woman has committed. We shall produce other victims, other mothers more wretched even than this one—"

"But who is she? What is the name of the lady?" asked Raverand, becoming excited. Mme. Ebsen opened her eyes in astonishment that he had not guessed. And Léonie:

"Why, it is Madame Autheman . . ."

The lawyer made a gesture of discouragement.

"Oh! in that case . . ."

His experience as former *bâtonnier* kept him from finishing the sentence, but in his heart he knew there was nothing to be done. On the contrary, it was now his business to dissuade the poor woman from a dangerous and useless law-suit. The Authemans were too strong; as to reputation, morality, and fortune, they were beyond the power of attack. She must try artifice, she must be patient. Besides, even if a suit were begun, during its progress Éline would become of age, and naturally . . ."

"Then there is no justice!" cried Mme. Ebsen, in the disconsolate accent of the peasant woman of

Petit-Port, who in her own sorrow remembered the grief of that other. Raverand, to whom a card had just been presented, rose:

"Perhaps the Keeper of the Seals might demand an official investigation as to the whereabouts of the young girl. . . . But how can we persuade the Minister to undertake so delicate a step? . . . unless . . . you are a foreigner, a Dane, are you not? By all means, see your Consul."

Then, as he conducted them out, in a low voice to the Countess:

"After all, the child is not unhappy."

"No; but she is."

"Oh! she is a mother, and all mothers are martyrs." And, changing his tone: "And how is it with you? How is your husband doing?"

"I know nothing about him."

"You are, then, still implacable?"

"Yes."

"Nevertheless, he is more steady. . . . He is taking quite an interest in politics. . . . His last speech at the Chamber . . ."

"Good-bye, my friend . . ."

In the carriage the mother said: "I am cold." Her teeth were chattering. "Will you drive me home, Léonie?"

"Why no, of course not. . . . We are going first to see this Consul. Where is he?"

"Faubourg Poissonnière. . . . Monsieur Desnos."

Desnos was a great furniture manufacturer, whose woods came from Norway and Denmark, and it was in the interest of his business that he had

obtained this post of Consul. He was, moreover, totally ignorant of the country he represented, as to its customs, its language, and even its geographical position. The offices were on the right side of a court, overlooked by the windows of an immense manufactory that extended far in the rear. The air was filled with a tumult of hammers, saws, lathes, and kept in motion by the bass pulsations of a steam-engine. The same activity prevailed in the interior; only here it was exhibited by the scratching of pens, the moving of heavy folios, the crackling of the gas burning over bowed heads.

Here, as at the lawyer's, the name of the Count d'Arlot gained them instant admittance, and Desnos immediately came forward to receive the ladies in his office, — a large, handsomely appointed apartment, separated from the designing-room by a glass door, through which could be seen rows of men in aprons, seated or standing, and all working in silence.

"Is there a light upstairs?" asked the manufacturer, supposing that the ladies had come to look for furniture. When he learned that their business was with him as Consul, his smile became frosty, and his debonair Parisian face serious.

"The hours of the consulate are from two to four . . . However, since you are here, ladies . . ." With hands crossed over his vest, comfortable and well filled as the vest of an important merchant ought to be, he listened to the distant rumbling of his engine, which jarred the floor and windows of the room.

Ah! *bon Dieu!* What is this that they are telling him? Poison, abduction! Why, they should carry this story to the *Ambigu.* In the heart of Paris, with a telephone in his office, and Edison lamps in his workshops, how was it possible to believe an occurrence so incredible? Suddenly, in the midst of the recital, told by the two women alternately, — for Mme. Ebsen was so nervous that the Countess was obliged to come to her assistance, — Desnos arose, indignant. He could not hear another word. Autheman was his banker. . . . Their house was the richest, the safest in the city; their honor the most scathless. . . . Never could such infamies have taken place at the Authemans'.

"Believe me, Madame . . ." He addressed himself altogether to the Countess, as if he considered the other beneath the notice of such an important personage. . . . "Do not repeat such calumnies. The honor of the Authemans is the honor of the entire Parisian tradespeople."

He bowed. Time was precious to business men, especially toward the end of the day and the week. However, he was always at the disposal of the Countess. The hours for the consulate were from two to four. Ask for the secretary, M. Dahlerup.

The clamor from the shops rumbled through the black court. Carts and drays rolled heavily over the pavement, making it vibrate like a springing-board. The two women endeavored to make their way to the coupé, Mme. Ebsen talking and gesticulating in the midst of all the racket.

"Ah! well, I am all alone, since everybody else is afraid!"

Workmen, unloading their timbers, jostled against her. She tried to move out of their way, and just escaped the wheel of a truck. Deaf, heavy, awkward, and terrified, she uttered little childish cries of fear, when Léonie came and took her by the hand, wondering, as she did so, what would become of the poor creature, if she were left all alone in her sorrow to struggle with the world. No, she would not abandon her. That investigation of which Raverand spoke should take place. M. d'Arlot should see the Minister the first thing in the morning.

"Oh! how good you are, my dear!" And in the obscurity of the carriage the mother's tears burned Léonie's gloves.

To ask a favor of her husband, a stranger, although living under the same roof, to whom henceforth nothing of her life was to be known, was a genuine sacrifice that Léonie d'Arlot was making for her old friend. She thought of it all as she drove home from the Rue du Val-de-Grâce. She recalled, one by one, every sinister detail of her wrongs. They were as poignant in her mind as if they had happened yesterday; the little blushing bride in her calling dress, her ingenuous laughter, her whispered confidences, as if to an older sister; then "I must go and see my uncle;" and as they delayed returning, how suddenly, warned by a presentiment, she had surprised the guilty man; how base and ignoble he had appeared, like some

thief, with his stammered words, his pallor, his trembling hands.

What sort of an existence had her husband led since then? What effort had he ever made to win her pardon? All his time was passed at the Club or in the company of courtesans. During the last six months, however, having tired of his mistress, a former actress, who kept a little trinket-shop in the Avenue de l'Opéra, with a back room for assignations, he had thrown himself into politics, and had found this, too, a trinket-shop, with its background of coarseness and treachery; and now his own fireside had become attractive to him, even necessary as a place in which he might bring his friends together and win their influence. Without daring to ask it, he would have been much pleased to have his wife receive, and go into society again — to forget the past. No, no, never that. They were separated until death.

After this oath of relentlessness she began to question herself, and considered her loneliness. Constant attendance at church did not in the least fill the overwhelming emptiness of her days, nor was there any relief in following up the celebrated preachers of the time; the long hours at Saint-Clotilde upon her knees were most dispiriting. To be sure, she had her child to preserve her from wrong: but is it enough in life not to do evil? "Ah! Raverand is right, — I am implacable."

During the last few hours, however, she had become less unforgiving. It was as if the living

warmth of the mother's tears had softened her heart and made it more human; at all events, the Ebsen tragedy had strangely touched her, had drawn her from that mystic torpor from which she saw no deliverance, no end, but death.

"The Count is in the *salon* with Mademoiselle . . ."

For the first time in many months the *salon* was lighted, and before the cabinet piano, on a high stool, sat the little girl, superintended by her governess, a faithful soul, with sheep-like profile. She was playing a study, and the Count, watching the little fingers of his child wander over the keys, nodded his approval to the measure of the music. A large shaded lamp illumined this family scene.

"A little music before dinner . . ." said the Count, bowing, with a half-smile that moved his short, blond beard—it was gray in places—and his large, sensual nose, to which his parliamentary position was to impart an expression of benevolence and dignity.

In her agitation, caused by this revival of the semblance of domestic life, she began to excuse herself for being late, to explain the reason; then suddenly she exclaimed:

"Henri! I have a favor to ask you."

Henri! It was years since he had heard that name, for in the Avenue de l'Opéra he was called Biquette. The governess led the child from the room, and while removing her gloves and hat, which her maid took away, Léonie told of the steps she had taken for Mme. Ebsen, of how the

very name of Autheman seemed to inspire every one with awe, and of Raverand's advice to apply to the Keeper of the Seals. She was standing before the chimney-place, slender and charming, animated by her day's experiences, and the rosy glow of the fire, at which she was warming first one and then the other of her dainty, high-arched feet. He explained that what she asked — an appeal to the Minister — just at this moment offered many difficulties. They were in the midst of serious, very serious dissensions. There were the decrees, the law concerning the magistracy. She took a step forward, and lifted to his face her lovely eyes, in which there was a tinge of green:

"I beg of you . . ."

"Anything that you wish, my dear . . ."

He made a movement, as if to embrace her, to press her to his heart, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and an automatic voice announced that the Countess was served. Henri d'Arlot drew within his own his wife's arm, and passed into the dining-room, where the child, already seated at the table, watched them with inquiring eyes. It seemed to the husband that the soft round arm trembled a little, as it pressed upon his.

This was the only result of Mme. Ebsen's day's work.

XIV.

THE LAST LETTER.

"PRIDE, it is the only living thing in that woman. . . . She has neither heart nor bowels. . . . The Anglican plague has devoured them all. She is as hard and cold as . . . well! as this marble. . . ."

The old Dean, seated before his fireplace, struck the mantel violently with the tongs, which Bonne, without saying a word, took from his hands. In his excitement, he did not notice what she had done, and continued the account of his visit at the Hôtel Autheman.

"I reasoned with her, begged, and threatened her. All I could obtain from her were cant phrases about the lukewarmness of faith, the value of great examples. . . . She certainly talks well, the wretch! There was too much jargon about Canaan, but she is eloquent and convincing — I am not astonished that she turned that little head. . . . See what she has done with Crouzat. Well, at any rate, I told her what I thought of her, mind you!"

He arose from his chair, and strode up and down the room.

"After all," said I, "who are you, Madame? By whose authority do you speak? In God's name? No, it is not God who is leading you. In your actions I see only yourself, your own wicked, cold heart, that desires something, I know not what, in life, and seems always to have a grievance to avenge."

"Was the husband there?" asked the little old woman, in a frightened voice. "And did he say nothing?"

"Not a word. . . . He only smiled in his awkward way, and gazed at me with eyes that burn like a lens in the sunlight."

"But sit down. You are in a terrible state!"

Standing behind the chair in which her tall husband at last consented to take a little rest, Mme. Aussandon wiped the broad, full brow — it was a thinker's brow — and removed from his neck the silk muffler that he had forgotten to take off.

"You become too excited, indeed you do . . ."

"How can I help it? Such a great misfortune, such an injustice! How I pity that poor fellow, Lorie!"

"Oh! as for him . . ." she said, with a gesture of indignation against the man who had for a time been preferred to her son.

"But the mother! That mother who is not even allowed to know where her child is concealed. . . . Imagine yourself before that woman, and her silence, which the cowardice of men makes possible. What would you do?"

"I? I would eat her head. . . ." This was said

with such a fierce snap of the jaws, that the Dean began to laugh, and, encouraged by the resentment of his wife, he went on:

"Oh! But they have not yet seen the last of me. Nothing shall prevent me from speaking, from denouncing them before the public conscience . . . even if I should forfeit my place by doing so —"

Unfortunate word, that suddenly reminded the wife of the seriousness of the situation. Ah! no, not for a minute. From the moment she thought his position in jeopardy, it was not to be considered. . . .

"You will please me by remaining perfectly quiet in the matter. . . . Do you understand me, Albert?"

"Bonne . . . Bonne . . ." pleaded poor Albert. But Bonne would hear nothing. If no one but themselves was concerned, they might risk it. But there were the boys. Louis was expecting his promotion as Sub-chief, Frederick was looking for a Collectorship, and the Major had a longing for the Cross. Powerful as were the Authemans, they had but to make a sign. . . .

"But my duty?" murmured the Dean, visibly weakening.

"You have already done your duty, and more. Do you suppose the Authemans will ever forgive your harsh words of to-day? . . . Listen. . . ."

She took both his hands in hers, and reasoned with him. Would he be satisfied, at his age, to be running around again officiating at marriages

and burials? He was always saying: On the hill-top. On the hill-top. But he ought to remember with what difficulty he had climbed there. At seventy-five it would be extremely hard to tumble down to the bottom again.

"Bonne."

It was his last word of resistance, and this he made for honor's sake; for his wife's reasonings only confirmed the advice of his colleagues. He had consulted several members of the Faculty awhile ago, as they had walked together around the little rectangular courtyard, a place only a little less sad and dreary than the implacable egoism of man. Ah! yes, the thought of again climbing the hill, with his aged, trembling hands, frightened him; but what was still more appalling was the prospect of the domestic scenes, the terrible cyclones through which he must pass, if he should take the audacious step that he had meditated, after his visit to the Authemans.

But what a blow to give the poor mother! She had come to him so full of confidence, having no other support than his, amid the indifference of all around her. And now he too has stolen away, like all the rest, obliged either to flee from that terrible sorrow, or else to deceive her with vague, false promises.

"Wait! . . . this is but a crisis . . . God will not permit such a thing."

Ah! a brave Dean he, the Dean of hypocrites and cowards.

From this day, no more rest, no more contented

labor on the hill-top for old Aussandon. Remorse, that sinister intruder, installed itself at his table, and followed him everywhere he went. It attended him as he walked along the sordid Faubourg Saint-Jacques, or waited at the corner of the Boulevard Arago until he should come out from his lectures. Although it was the time for sowing his seed, the pastor dared no longer work in his garden, for there his remorse assumed a visible form, in the pale face, the swollen eyes of the mother, who watched from her window to see what religion could do for her, from whom religion had taken away all that was dear to her.

She soon perceived that she was deserted by him also, and was not astonished, for he had acted only as all her other friends had done. Fear had influenced some, pity others, since they could do nothing to help her, and shrunk from suffering uselessly on account of her sorrow. Some also there were who were sceptical of this Anne Radcliffe-like adventure. In the enlightenment of modern Paris, such a thing seemed improbable, and, shaking their heads almost suspiciously, they asked:

"Who knows what is concealed under all this?"

Yes, Paris is enlightened, is throbbing with progress and with generous ideas, but it is frivolous and superficial. Here events follow one another on short, rapid waves, like those of the Mediterranean, each submerged wave scattering its débris on the one succeeding. There is no depth, no durability. "Poor Madame Ebsen! Ah! yes, it is dreadful. . . ." But the burning of the shops

known as *L'Univers*, the woman hacked to pieces and found wrapped in a number of *Le Temps*, in which she had formerly taken so much comfort, the suicide of the two little Cazarès, soon had more recent claims on compassion. The only house in which she continued to be received with unfailing kindness, mingled with much personal gratitude, was the *hôtel* in the Rue Vézelay; but this was suddenly closed, the Count and Countess d'Arlot, with their child, having gone to Nice, after obtaining the communication of a confidential report on the Inquiry of the Court of Corbeil.

To the report, the evidence of which was collected still more ingeniously and shrewdly than in the Damour affair, and which gave a detailed description of the château, the schools, and the Retreat, there were added the names of the *Workers* — *les euvérières* as young Nicolas called them — actually living at Port-Sauveur:

Sophie Chalmette, aged 36, born at La Rochelle.
Marie Souchette, aged 20, Petit-Port.
Bastienne Gelinot, aged 18, Athis-Mons.
Louise Braun, aged 27, Berne.
Catherine Looth, aged 32, United States.

As for Éline Ebsen, she was travelling for the *Work*, in Switzerland, Germany, and England, with no fixed residence, and corresponded regularly with her mother.

For some time, in fact, thanks to Pastor Birk, Mme. Ebsen had been able to write to her daughter, but she was in the dark as to her place of residence, for the addresses were supplied at Port-Sauveur,

where all her letters were sent. At first, furious and desperate in tone, with heart-rending appeals, abuse, and even threats against the banker and his wife, the mother's letters were soon modified, for Éline refused to reply to such insulting attacks against friends whom she respected, and who were worthy of the highest esteem. From that time the maternal complaint became more humble, more timid. She confined herself to pictures of her solitary, desolate life, but they in no wise succeeded in softening the rigid, cold mood of the young girl. That was as impersonal as her writing, which seemed to have congealed into the long, regular English style, with no shading, no fine strokes. There was news of her health, vague exalted talk about the service of God, and always some mystical invocation, some expression of affection for Jesus, replacing the loving enthusiasm, the tender messages and kisses of the old days.

Nothing could be more singular than this epistolary dialogue, this contrast between declamatory, emotional jargon, and the accent of natural affection; heaven and earth were in communication, but they were too far apart for either to understand the other; the sensitive fibres between the two were severed, and floating in space.

The mother wrote:

"My beloved Child,—Where are you? What are you doing? I am thinking of you, and weeping for you. . . . Yesterday was All Souls' day; I went over there, and laid on Grandmother's grave a little bouquet which I now send to you."

The daughter replied:

"I thank you for the remembrance you sent; but it is far sweeter to me that I possess a living Saviour to all eternity, than to have those worthless flowers. It is with this Saviour, dear Mother, that I ardently desire for you to find that pardon, peace, and consolation which he will so freely give you. . . ."

And yet these letters, cold and disheartening as they were, were all the comfort the mother had; she dried her tears only to read them, and in her expectation of them, in the hope with which her trembling fingers tore open the envelope, she found courage to live, and to resist those mad resolutions, those rash acts that Pastor Birk so dreaded for his "poor friend." She determined, for instance, to go to Mme. Autheman's door, and wait there until her carriage should come, when she would hang on it, and cry, even under its wheels: "My child? Where is my child?" Or, she would even set out for London, Basle, Zurich, and herself make an investigation, as she had been advised to do at the Bureau of Research.

"Poor friend, poor friend. . . . But you must not think of it." Those long journeys, with their uncertain results, would be her ruin; more dangerous still, any act of violence in Paris, which would expose her to imprisonment, or something even worse. What he meant by worse, Birk did not explain; but the air of mystery in his big eyes, and the way in which he elevated the points of his apostle-like beard, expressed a horror that was

contagious. And taking her hands in his own heavy, clammy hands, odorous of the pomade that he used on his long, carefully curled hair, he calmed her, and soothed her fears:

"Let me manage all this for you. . . . I am on the spot, at Port-Sauveur; it is only on your account that I remain. Trust to me . . . your child shall be returned to you. . . ."

How mistaken can one be in people! Here was this man, whom she had so much disliked, of whom she had been so distrustful, put on her guard by his sugar-coated, mawkish appearance, and his evident hunt after a dowry, and yet he was the only one who had not deserted her. He came to see her, and kept her advised of what he was doing in her behalf; he had even invited her to eat their national *Risengroed* in his smart bachelor apartment, furnished and embellished entirely with the gifts of his devotees. And every time, as he took her home, he said:

"You need some diversion, poor friend. . . ." But how was it possible to be diverted from this engrossing anguish, this one, fixed idea that was revived by all her surroundings? Éline, when she went away, had taken nothing with her, neither linen nor clothing, — the house was full of her, — and from the open drawer and the wardrobe the scent of the dainty perfume which she always used, and the many trifling articles of toilet scattered about her room, were to the mother as so many living pictures of her child. On the table still lay the long green account-book, in which every

evening the young girl inscribed their little expenses, opposite the amount due her for her lessons of the day. This neat, well-kept book, with its regular columns of figures, told the story of the child's daily life, her honesty and courage, her days so full of occupation, so full of thought for others:

"*A cloak for Fanny.*"

"*Lent to Henriette.*"

Opposite Saint Elizabeth's day, Mme. Ebsen's birthday, was written "*bouquets and surprise,*" and on the margin in a childish, tender way, was: "*I love my dear Mamma.*"

Truly a book of common sense, such as used to be kept in all families, and which old Montaigne found "so pleasant to see, so admirable to extricate us from trouble." In this case, on the contrary, the trouble was greatly aggravated by reading these pages; and when, in the evening, Mme. Ebsen turned over the leaves of the account-book with Lorie, tears filled their eyes, and they dared not look at each other.

To poor Lorie it was almost as if he were widowed for a second time, and, although he could wear no mourning, this loss was perhaps even more cruel than the other, for with his grief was mingled a feeling of humiliation that he had been unable to fill the heart of this young girl, so calm in appearance, but, in reality, eager for a passion that it had gone to seek in higher spheres. Without confessing it to himself, the departure of Éline had in a measure soothed his wounded self-love; he

was not the only one who had been deserted; and drawn together by their common sorrow, the mother and he resumed their former affectionate relations. On returning from the office, he went directly upstairs to learn if there were any news, and passed long hours in the chimney-corner, listening to the same story, repeated in the same words, with the same outbursts of sobs; and, in the quiet of the little *salon*, with its unchanged surroundings, the silence of the street disturbed only by the noises that came from the Boulevard, he instinctively sought Éline and Grandmother in their favorite corner, the corner so long made gay by the merry laughter of his little girl, but which was now oppressive with darkness and oblivion, with all the gloom that follows death and separation.

Alone all the day, Mme. Ebsen could not remain in the house; and, as soon as her small household duties were completed, she escaped and went out to see some friends, her former Sunday wall-flowers, whose placidity never wearied of hearing of the abduction and the beans of Saint Ignatius. Then, constantly tormented with the nervousness that accompanies a fixed idea, as if the body had undertaken to re-establish the normal equilibrium of its being, she started out to wander through the streets, becoming one of the innumerable crowd who make up the loafers of Paris, who stop wherever a crowd has collected, who look in all the shop-windows, who stand leaning over the parapets of the bridges, and regard with the same indiffer-

ence the flowing tide, an overturned omnibus, and the display of the latest fashions. Who knows how many inventors, poets, lovers, criminals, or madmen may be among these people who follow the crowd to escape remorse or to pursue a chimera! Somnambulists with one idea, solitary in the midst of the greatest crowds, these loafers are the most engrossed of all men, for nothing distracts them, — neither the cloud on which they fix their gaze, nor the elbowing throng, nor the book whose leaves they turn with eyes elsewhere.

In all her roamings over Paris, Mme. Ebsen invariably returned to the same spot, the Hôtel Autheman, where she had at first endeavored to introduce herself and gain some information. But to bring a gleam of intelligence over the impassive countenances of those mercenary hirelings, there was lacking the indispensable reflection of the tip. Now she contented herself with prowling about the place, drawn hither by some irresistible instinct, even when she was certain that her daughter was no longer in France; and, standing for hours against the palings of a vacant lot opposite the *hôtel*, she had a view of the courtyard, of the tall black walls, and the irregular windows with their carved capitals. Carriages stood before the door; people entered and came out, carrying portfolios protected by steel chains, or bending beneath sacks of gold on their backs. On the great balcony lingered solemn-faced persons. All moved smoothly, without embarrassment, without noise, not a sound, save the continuous musical clink of coin, a silvery,

indistinct murmur as from some invisible, innocent spring, but one which grew from morning until evening, spreading over Paris, over France, over the whole world, and became that broad, impetuous flood, with its dreadful whirlpools, known as the Autheman fortune, which terrified and awed the highest, the strongest, and which shook the firmest, most rigid consciences.

Sometimes Mme. Ebsen saw the great gate open to allow the piebald horses and chestnut coupé to pass out. She would have recognized it, even had she not caught a glimpse of the cruel, haughty face behind the polished glass, tempting her momentarily to commit some act of rashness, from which she had hitherto been restrained by the threats of Pastor Birk, by her fear of imprisonment, or of that other terrible thing which he feared to name.

When she returned to her home in the evening, worn out by her long wanderings, by those vain waitings, after remaining outside as long as possible to allow the unexpected time to happen, with what throbbing of the heart, with what consuming anguish, did she ask each day:

"Is there nothing for me, Mother Blot?" What she found, alas! at long intervals was a stiff, cold letter from her "devoted;" but never, never that for which she hoped without daring to express it.

One day, however, a violent and noisy ring of the bell, by a hand that seemed familiar, gave her a cold shiver. Trembling from head to foot, she opened the door. Two affectionate arms were

thrown around her, and the flowers on a little summer hat all dripping with the falling snow moistened her cheek. Henriette Briss! She had just left her place at the Russian Ambassador's, in Copenhagen. . . . Excellent people, but so vulgar. . . . Besides, she could remain no longer away from Paris, in spite of what her former Superior at the Sacred Heart had written her, that Paris was to her like a razor in the hand of a two-year-old child. . . .

As she talked, Henriette entered the small, familiar apartment, and settled herself comfortably as if she were at home, without observing, in her buoyant abstraction, the desolate face of the mother. Suddenly she turned around with one of her quick movements, always suggestive of a goat:

"And Lina? Where is she? Will she return soon?"

A sob answered her. Ah! indeed, Lina. There was no more Lina. "Gone . . . stolen. . . . They have taken her from me . . . I am all alone . . ."

For a moment Henriette could not understand, and even when she did, she could not believe this of Lina, a girl so reasonable, so practical, so devotedly attached to her family. . . . Ah! this Jeanne Autheman certainly knew how to rule over the souls of those with whom she came in contact; and while the mother wept, she looked curiously at two or three small gilt-edged volumes — faithless accomplices of the crime — that lay on the

table as proofs of their complicity . . . *Morning Hours; — Communions of a Christian Soul.* No, truly, this woman was not the first of her kind. If she were not a Protestant, one would say she was a sister of Antoinette Bourignon.

"Who is that? Bourignon?" exclaimed the mother, drying her eyes.

"What! you do not know? She was a prophetess of the time of Madame Guyon. . . . She has written more than twenty books."

"Let her be whom she will," said Mme. Ebsen, gravely, "if she, too, has caused mothers to weep, she was not much good, so she is n't worth talking of any longer."

A feeling of instinct warned her that Henriette did not sympathize in her grief, and that the girl hesitated to express the thought that trembled on her lips, that brought the glitter into her pale eyes, and made the bony fingers quiver as she turned the leaves of the mysterious little volumes.

"Could you lend me this?" asked the devotee of the Sacred Heart, consumed with eagerness to read these *Communions*, that she might be able to refute their heresies.

"Oh! yes, take it . . . take them all . . ."

Henriette embraced her enthusiastically, and as she departed, hurriedly left her address, — Rue de Sèvres, with a decorator, named Magnabos; very good people indeed. There were several convents in the neighborhood. . . . "Do come and see me. . . . It will distract you . . . "

This visit, with the happy memories that it re-

called, of the old discussions, in which Lina had shown herself so wise, so sensible, was to Mme. Ebsen a grievous trial. So were also certain anniversaries which she and Lina had formerly celebrated or wept over together. The *Juleaften* this year had no Christmas tree, no *Risengroed;* and the anniversary of Grandmother's death, with its sad pilgrimage to the cemetery, and the still sadder return to the lonely fireside, were to the poor woman bitter experiences. Was it not, on returning from the cemetery last year, that Éline had sworn "to love her dearly, and never to part from her"? And, under the influence of this recollection, she wrote her daughter the following beseeching, broken-hearted letter:

"If I could only work, or give lessons to divert my thoughts; but sorrow has weakened me, and weeping has inflamed my eyes. Since my illness, I also hear with difficulty. My money too is nearly exhausted. In a few months I shall have no more, and then what will become of me? Ah! my little darling, on my knees I wait for you — It is no longer your mother pleading, it is only a most unhappy old woman."

The answer came, post-marked from Jersey, written on a postal-card, that any one might read:

"I am deeply pained, dear mother, at the bad news you give me concerning your health, but I am consoled when I remember that these trials draw you each day nearer to God. As for me, my sole concern is for your eternal salvation and my own. I must live far from the world, and keep myself from evil."

Cruelty of cruelties, this testimony to the Gospel of freedom! No more intimacy to be allowed, no more whispered confidences, no more silent tears. Ah! the wretches. See what they had made of her child. "*I keep myself from evil.*" Her mother was the evil.

"Well, I shall write no more. She is lost to me. . . ."

And, in her large handwriting, the mother inscribed across the address: *Last letter from my child.*

"Madame Ebsen! Madame Ebsen!" Some one was calling her from the little garden. She dried her eyes and staggering to the window, opened it, and saw M. Aussandon, who lifted to her his white head, beautiful and noble.

"I am going to preach to-morrow at the Oratory. It is for you . . . come and hear me. You will be gratified. . . ."

He bowed, raised his little cap, and continued the inspection of his rose-bushes, where green shoots were already sprouting. It was easy to see that Mme. Aussaudon was not at home, or the old Dean would not have been out on this bleak, cold day of early March.

XV.

AT THE ORATORY.

THE vestry, where the preachers of the church of the Oratory robe themselves, are two small rooms, not much larger than cupboards, furnished simply with straw-bottomed chairs, a pine table, and a porcelain stove like those seen in a customs station. Here Aussandon, surrounded by clergymen and a number of his colleagues on the Faculty, talk in subdued tones, and clasp hands extended in greeting. Meanwhile carriages roll up, and stop at the two entrances of the temple. Like a wave, beating against every source of access, the crowd gathers, and spreads through the vestibules with their gloomy, cracked walls.

The old Dean, ready to appear in the pulpit, has put on his black robe and white neck-band, a severe costume, more suggestive of the Palais de Justice than of the church, but which is peculiarly fitting for the minister of the Reformed Church, who is regarded as a simple advocate of God. This to-day is especially the rôle of Aussandon, that of Advocate and even of Advocate-General; for the notes that he is turning over at the end of the table contain a terrible arraignment against the Authemans. For five months he has thought

about it, and hesitated, on account of the consequences to himself and his family, and because Bonne has always been there to watch him.

At last, however, the old lady has been summoned to Commentry by the birth of a grandson; and the Dean, seeing therein the merciful compassion of God for his poor, human weakness and rest for his conscience as well, set himself immediately to the work. His sermon ready,—completed in two evenings, for all these ideas had been buzzing in his head for so long a time that he was nearly distracted,—he begged one of the preachers whose name was posted on the door of the Oratory to yield him his Sunday, and for the last week all Protestant Paris has been eager to hear the illustrious Dean thundering for one last time, like Bossuet, when Mlle. de La Vallière took the veil, "after a silence of many years, in a voice no longer heard in the pulpits."

Carriages continue to roll to the entrance, there is a noise of opening and shutting doors, spendidly caparisoned horses stamp and paw the ground, the murmur of the crowd in the vestibules grows louder, and every moment the door of the vestry-room half opens to admit a deacon, some old acquaintance, or a member of the Consistory.

"Good morning . . . we are all here."

"Good morning, good morning, Monsieur Arlès."

"I have not seen the placard. On what do you preach?"

"The Gospel for the day . . . the Sermon on the Mount."

"You will imagine yourself back at Mondardier with your wood-cutters."

"No, no . . . it is for Paris that I shall speak. I had something to say before dying."

One of his colleagues on the Faculty murmurs softly, as he passes from the room:

"Take care, Aussandon."

The Dean shakes his head, without replying; he is familiar with all this talk of prudence, from having heard it so long. Did he not return once more to the Hôtel Autheman, asking of that pitiless woman but one thing, to tell him Lina's residence? He had made up his mind to go himself and seek that poor deluded soul, and to bring her back to the tender arms of her mother. Mme. Autheman invariably answered:

"I know not . . . God has taken her." And when the pastor threatened to denounce her publicly, before the whole congregation, she had calmly replied:

"Do so, Dean. We will go and hear you."

"Ah! Well! you shall hear me, base woman." And it is with an outburst of anger that he gropes his way up the dark little winding stairs that lead to the pulpit, pushes open a low door, and enters into the light and air of the immense edifice.

The old church of the Oratorians, ceded the Protestants by the Concordat, is the largest and most imposing temple in Paris. The others, the recent ones especially, do not sufficiently arouse the religious feelings. The aristocratic temple in

the Rue Roquépine, in form of a rotunda, the light falling on its white walls from above, resembles the Grain Exchange. Saint-André, the church of the Liberals, with wide galleries, reminds one of a café-concert. The Oratory alone sums up and symbolizes all the dogmas of the Reformation and of pure Christianity, — candles extinguished, images absent, its vast walls bare, except for the scrolls containing fragments of hymns and verses. In the arch of the chapels, which have been almost entirely walled up, a few galleries have been preserved. The choir has been suppressed, the organ stands in the place of the altar; and all the life of the temple is grouped before the pulpit, around a long table, ordinarily covered with a cloth, but on Communion Sundays filled with baskets and cups of silver-gilt.

This is the only formal religious display; and this simplicity, augmented by the height of the arches, the mystery of the stained-glass windows, becomes truly solemn when the Oratory is filled, as it is to-day, its benches black with the crowd, its galleries, and even the irregular stairways leading to them, overflowing with people. Above the main doorway, in a stained-glass window, flames an enormous Cross of the Legion of Honor, with its broad purple ribbon, a souvenir of the first pastor, decorated after the Concordat. The light from this window proudly sheds its radiance over the whole temple, flushing with roseate tints the walls, the organ pipes, and the Communion cups at the foot of the pulpit, where all eyes eagerly seek the pastor.

Invisible as yet, hidden as he is in the obscure corner of the pulpit, Aussandon endeavors to calm the emotion that quickens the throbbing of his heart every time he comes to plead God's cause. With that faculty possessed by orators and actors of distinguishing faces in an audience, he notices the absence of Autheman from the Elders' seat, but sees directly in front of him, at the point where he would naturally direct his discourse, the erect figure of the banker's wife, her small pale face and inflexible eyes, which burn and attract him, even at that distance. Over there in the gallery, with bowed shoulders, and wrapped in her drapery of mourning, is the mother, faithful to the invitation, but moved, oh! so deeply.

She knows that at last the hour of justice has sounded, that this great orator stands in the pulpit for her; for her all this crowd of the wealthy, the illustrious, this line of carriages before the door, and this music, whose sweet, swelling harmonies bring tears to her eyes. For her this Gospel that the Reader is just beginning, and those wonderful verses of the Sermon on the Mount, which pass like a refreshing breeze over her burning eyelids: . . . *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* . . . *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* . . . Oh! yes, they that mourn. . . . Oh! yes, they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. . . . And at every promise of the Bible she presses the hand of Lorie, who is seated by her side, almost as greatly agitated as herself. Then

a choir of women's voices, accompanied by the organ, intones Marot's Psalm:

"Seigneur, écoute mon bon droit:
Entends ma voix quand je te crie. . . ."

It is the cry of her distress that rises toward the lofty arches, on voices as fresh and young as that of her Éline.

But Aussandon has just emerged from the shadow; and proudly carrying his seventy-five years, his noble head illumed by the long white neck-band over his judge's robe, he recites, in strong, emphatic tones, the verse he has chosen for his text:

"*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?*" Then, he begins his sermon, very simply, and in a lower tone, for now it is the man speaking in God's stead.

"My brothers, it is now three hundred years since Pierre Ayraut, an advocate in the Parliament of Paris, a wise and scholarly man, had the sorrow of losing his only son. He was abducted by the Jesuits, enrolled in their order, and was never again permitted to see his family. The despair of the father was terrible, and so eloquent his pleadings, that the King, the Parliament, and even the Pope interposed for the restoration of his son. He could, however, never be found. Pierre Ayraut then wrote his beautiful treatise on *Paternal Authority*, and immediately afterward lay down and died of a broken heart.

And now, after three centuries, Protestants and Christians of the Reformed Church have just repeated this abominable crime. . . ."

Here follows, in bold outlines, the story of the daughter's disappearance, the mother's hopeless grief. Oh! she has written no treatise, she has disturbed neither kings nor Parliament, she is one of the lowly ones of whom the Scriptures speak as having only tears to give, and giving them always, abundantly.

Up to this time there has been no allusion to indicate the guilty ones, no word of personality. His hearers are still guessing, they are still in doubt. But when he speaks of a woman with pitiless heart, who shelters herself and her deeds behind a respected name and a colossal fortune, every one realizes that this is a direct attack on Madame Autheman, who sits before him, her face constantly uplifted toward the speaker, without a flush to tinge her waxen cheek. The deep voice of Aussandon thunders on, however, and rolls through the building like a mountain storm which the echo catches up and repeats. It has been a long time since the church of the Oratory, accustomed to the rounded, unctuous phrases of the stereotyped, ecclesiastical sort, has heard such bold and simple accents, such images drawn from Nature. The nave is redolent with the balsam odors of the pine forest, and the murmur of rustling leaves which reminds one of the Holy Scriptures, for the Bible, in its graceful style and primitive splendor, is the book of Nature, and of those who dwell near to its heart.

And with what fine scorn he envelops, without calling it by name, the *Work* of the Evangelist Dames, and all other pious institutions of the same class, which he characterizes as excrescences on the tree of Christianity, parasites that devour and destroy its life. In order that the tree may preserve its strength and its sap, these harmful growths must be entirely cut away; and he, the aged priest, begins their extermination, he makes a terrible slaughter of their public testimonies, their mystical and ecstatic exhibitions, of those *Aïssa-Ouas*-like séances; they are not less comical but more violent than the uproarious meetings of that Salvation Army, which covers Paris with gigantic placards, and stations at the street-corners young girls, dressed in knickerbockers, who distribute their call to Jesus in leaflets to every passer-by.

And suddenly, with a sweeping, magnificent gesture, which seems to reach beyond the pulpit and the church, and to tear aside the stones from the vault, and to penetrate the very mystery of the clouds, he cries:

"Great God, God of charity, of pity, and of justice, Shepherd of men and of the stars, see what a caricature they have made of thy Divinity, travestied after their own image. Although, in thy Sermon on the Mount thou didst disown and curse them, false prophets and miracle-mongers continue to commit crimes in thy name. Their lies envelop in a fog thy Religion of Light. This is why thy aged servant, bowed down with the weight of years, and already entered into that

evening of life when one meditates and holds his peace, ascends the pulpit this day to denounce these outrages before the Christian conscience, and to make their perpetrators hear once again thy malediction:

"*Depart from me; . . . I never knew you.*"

The pastor's words fall on that amazed and listening silence which is the applause of religious assemblies. Everywhere eyes are wet with tears, deep sighs are drawn, and up there, in her gallery corner, the poor mother sobs aloud, her face hidden in her hands. This time they are comforting tears, tears without bitterness or sting. At last she is avenged, she is relieved from the anguish she has suffered from the thought that God could be on the side of those wicked people. No, no; the God of Justice is with her, he protests, he commands. Éline must now listen to him, she will certainly return to her mother.

Now the Dean, descended from the pulpit, stands before the long table on which the wine trembles in the cups, between the four baskets heaped with bread; and, as he recites the beautiful, simple prayers that precede the Communion: "*Hear, my brothers, after what manner our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has instituted the Holy Communion —*"

he trembles when he sees the banker's wife sitting motionless and erect, in her place. What right has this proud creature here, after what she has just heard? Why did she not leave when the pastor pronounced the benediction, and requested

those who did not intend to commune to retire "in good order"? Would she really have the audacity . . . ? And, emphasizing for her benefit the words of the liturgy, he reads in a loud voice: "*Let each one examine himself before eating of this bread, and drinking of this cup, for whoever eats and drinks of them unworthily, eats and drinks to his own condemnation. . . .*"

She has not stirred; and of all those bowed flaxen heads that fill the church, hers is the only face that he sees. It is an enigma that he cannot understand, those serene eyes, which she keeps persistently fixed upon him. For the second time, conforming to the ritual, he repeats slowly, solemnly: "*If there be among you any who do not repent, and are not ready to repair the evil they have done to their neighbors, I declare that they must not come to this table for fear of profaning it.*"

All these Christians are sure of themselves; not one who trembles and disturbs the solemn immobility of this standing, waiting crowd. Then the pastor, in a grave tone, utters the words: "*Approach now, my brothers, to the table of the Lord.*"

To the rich, grand tones of the organ, the first rows move out, come forward, and place themselves in a semi-circle in the vacant space around the table. There is no priestly order; the servant is beside his master, the English hat of the governess next to the most aristocratic costumes; a great, cold spectacle, well in keeping with the bare walls, the real bread in the baskets, and that simplicity of adornment more nearly approaching the

primitive Church than are Catholic celebrations, with their altar cloths and embroidered symbols.

After a short, silent prayer, the pastor, raising his head, sees Mme. Autheman near him, at his right. It is with her that he must begin the Communion; and her pallor, her compressed lips are evidences enough that she has come, not in penitence, but in defiance, braving him who did not fear to denounce her publicly. Aussandon, also, is very pale. He has broken the bread, and holds it above the basket, while the tones of the organ die away, like the waves of the receding tide, so that the words of the consecration may be distinctly heard: "*The bread which we break is the Communion of the body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

A small ungloved hand is advanced tremblingly. He seems not to see it, and in a very low tone, without a glance, without a movement of the lips:

"Where is Lina?"

No answer.

"Where is Lina? . . ." he asks again.

"I know not. . . . God has taken her. . . ."

Then, sternly:

"Retire . . . you are unworthy. . . . There is nothing for you at the table of the Lord. . . ."

The whole congregation has heard his words, has understood his gesture. While the basket passes from hand to hand around the table, Jeanne Autheman, scarcely disturbed, proud and erect as ever under the insult, disappears in the crowd that leaves the table. She is certainly less agitated

than the pastor, who is almost overcome by the reaction from his emotion. The poor man has hardly the strength to lift the dripping cup in his fingers; the Communion finished, and the sacred service removed from the table, it is with choking voice that he recites the prayer of thanksgiving, and he cannot control his trembling hands sufficiently to raise them in benediction.

Usually, after the service, the sacristy is crowded with friends and admirers, who linger to express their enthusiastic congratulations to the preacher. To-day Aussandon is alone in the vast room, adorned with portraits and busts of the great Reformers of the Church. What he has just seen, in passing through the crowd — the embarrassment and disapproval evident on all faces — gives a significance to his isolation. His refusal to administer the Communion is a most serious matter. He has overstepped his prerogative as a pastor, and this abuse of his power will cost him dear. Several years ago, at Lyons, in a similar case, the pastor was dismissed, and the church closed. . . . And, while thus absorbed in his sad thoughts, the Dean sees before him, on the wall of the sacristy, an old, ingenuous engraving representing a *Pastor of the Desert*, in the time of persecutions. Kneeling around him are his flock, — tradespeople, peasants, some children, a few old people; and the pastor in his black gown stands in his little rolling watch-tower, while in the background may be seen the vague outlines of men on the watch against surprises.

This mountain scene, those rocks of basalt among the dense foliage of the chestnut-trees, recalls his pastorate in the Mézenc among his humble, simple-hearted people. . . . Ah! well, let them dismiss him, let them refuse him even a parish as insignificant as Mondardier, he will go and sleep in the huts of the charcoal-burners, he will hold worship under the open sky, for the flocks and their shepherds.

Yes, but Bonne!

He had not yet thought of that . . . and yet Bonne would return in two days. What a scene there would be! And he, the Dean of the church, the justiciary of God, who had not hesitated before the gravity of his action and the vengeance of the Authemans, trembles at the thought of that angry little woman, and begins to prepare in his troubled mind the letter which he will send to soften the shock of the news on her arrival.

All about him, they are walking in the sacristy. The sexton and his wife are putting away the Communion service, and arranging the room. They do not speak to the pastor, as if they, also, are afraid of compromising themselves. It is always from people lower in the social scale that one learns of his humiliation. Well! he must go. He rises with difficulty from his chair to pass into the vestry and disrobe. In the deserted temple hovers the vague murmur, the subsiding vibrations that a disappearing crowd leaves behind it, like the sound heard on a steamer when the engine stops and the screw has ceased to move. Shadows are creeping

on, the galleries are now visible only as dark outlines, the heavy rugs that were spread between the Communion table and the Deacons' seat are rolled up and piled together. There is something depressing in this solitary toilette of the sanctuary, like a theatre after the falling of the curtain.

Aussandon hastens on to the robing-room, and at the threshold stops, stunned. His wife is there. She has seen all, heard all, and as the door opens, she rushes toward him, jaw advanced, and bonnet awry on her silvering hair.

"Bonne . . ." stammers the poor Dean, in confusion.

She did not allow him to get any farther:

"Ah, my dear, my beloved husband . . . brave man."

And she throws herself, sobbing, into his arms.

"What! Do you know?"

Yes, yes, she knows, and he has acted nobly, and this stealer of children has received only the punishment that she deserves.

Oh, the magic of his voice and words! They have convinced this little woman, and have compelled her to discard every selfish interest; they have touched her sensitive point, the maternal instinct.

"Bonne . . . Bonne . . ."

Too deeply moved to speak, he has gathered the little wife to his heart, where he holds her in close embrace, almost buried in the folds of his black gown.

Ah! they may dismiss him, send him where

they will, now that Bonne is content, is pleased with him. Together they will climb the hill once more, haltingly, slowly, and with the tottering step of the aged, but supported by each other, and with the strength and satisfaction that come with the accomplishment of duty.

XVI.

GABRIELLE'S SEAT.

LONG before the hour when he was in the habit of returning from the office, Lorie-Dufresne hurried into Mme. Ebsen's apartment. His pallor, and his precautions in closing the door, startled the good woman.

"What is the matter?"

"Madame Ebsen, you must conceal yourself, you must leave here. . . . They are going to arrest you."

She stared at him.

"Me? . . . Arrest me? . . . and why?"

Lorie lowered his voice, as if he were himself frightened by the terrible words which he could scarcely articulate: "Madness . . . sequestration . . . official commitment. . . ."

"Shut me up! . . . But I am not mad. . . ."

"They have a certificate from Falconnet. I have seen it. . . ."

"A certificate! . . . Falconnet? . . ."

"Yes, the doctor who examines persons suspected of insanity. . . . You dined with him. . . ."

"I? I dined! . . ." She broke off and uttered a cry. "Oh! *mon Dieu!* . . ."

One day, at Birk's, she had met this old gentleman, who was very polite and wore a decoration. He had induced her to talk a great deal about Mme. Autheman and the beans of Saint Ignatius. Oh! miserable Birk, this then was the mysterious and terrible thing with which he had threatened her. To shut her up with lunatics, confine her like the husband of that poor woman down at Petit-Port. . . . And suddenly, seized with a paroxysm of terror, the trembling fear of a child who is pursued, she cried:

"My friend, my friend . . . protect me . . . do not leave me. . . ."

Lorie did his best to reassure her. No, certainly he would not abandon her; and the first thing to be done was to take her away, to hide her with some friend. He had thought of Henriette Briss, who, even if she was a little cracked, was an obliging creature. While he sent for a cab, Mme. Ebsen, as utterly bewildered as if the house had been on fire and the flames roaring all about her, gathered together a few things from the cupboards, a little money, Éline's portrait, and her letters. She hurried about, panting, without saying a word. Her terror was redoubled, when Mother Blot, returning with the cab, told how a person had called that morning, and questioned her about her tenant, as to what hour she went out and came in. Lorie interrupted her:

"If this man should come again, you will tell him that Madame Ebsen has gone away on a little trip. . . ."

"Ah! indeed . . ." and seeing the agitation of Mme. Ebsen, and the badly tied-up bundle on the floor, the old *concierge* asked in a whisper:

"Is she going to find her daughter?"

Lorie, delighted with the pretext, made a sign of yes, with a finger on his lips. In the street, fearing that they would be watched, for the former Sub-Prefect was familiar with the customs of the police, he called to the driver:

"To the Eastern Station." This fellow, with the immovable deliberation of a coachman who has a long trip before him, tucked the robe comfortably around him, and cracked his whip, totally oblivious of the impatience of Mme. Ebsen, who sat back in her corner, her bundle on her knees, opposite Lorie, no less anxious than herself.

He had his reasons for this. That same morning, while engaged at the office in cutting out with his huge tailor's shears all the articles from the day's papers containing any allusion to his Minister, he had been summoned into the presence of Chemineau. No branch of the service of the Minister of the Interior, or of any other Minister, is as complicated as that of Public Safety. It has to be classified under different heads, with compartments for the different divisions. . . . *Police for religious services . . . Surveillance of foreigners . . . Search for criminals . . . Authorization of engravings . . . Public meetings . . . Associations . . . Refugees . . . Gendarmerie.* . . .

It is probably to his association with *Messieurs les gendarmes* that Chemineau owed his new ap-

pearance; words cut short, mustache curled, monocle screwed in his eye. Lorie-Dufresne was dumfounded; he no longer bore the slightest resemblance to his model.

"A bad affair, my good fellow," said the Director, half of his words remaining stuck on the cosmetic with which his mustache was stiffened. "Yes, yes, you know what I mean . . . the scandal at the Oratory . . . You were seen there with that crazy woman."

Lorie protested for his old friend, a victim of one of the most heinous injustices. The other interrupted him sharply:

"She is mad, raving mad, a dangerous lunatic. . . . There is a medical certificate. The woman is to be clapped into Ville-Évrard, where she will be held pretty closely too. . . . As for Aussandon, he is decidedly in his dotage, and his dismissal will be in *l'Officiel* before the end of the week. And you, my good fellow, if it were not for our former relations . . ."

Softened by this remembrance, Chemineau planted himself in front of his dear old comrade, and looking him straight in the eye, scolded him gently. Come now, was he not stupid? To attack what was the most solid in Paris, the highest, the most upright; the Autheman fortune! . . . And here he was, a Sixteenth of May man, whose past ought to have taught him a little caution! It looked as if one lesson had not been enough, as if he wished, he and his youngsters, to starve again. The wretched Sixteenth of May man blanched at each

word. He saw himself again copying plays, and he only breathed freely when he was dismissed by the Director of Public Safety with the cold, curt words:

"If you commit another stupidity of the kind, I will throw you over!"

During the long drive from the Rue du Val-de-Grâce to Henriette's lodging in the Rue de Sèvres, passing by the Eastern Station, Lorie related this scene to his friend, and the new Chemineau had made such an impression upon him, that unconsciously he imitated his broken, hissing tones. He did not tell Mme. Ebsen Chemineau's concluding words, "I will throw you over," but he repeated that those people were too strong, that they must do nothing reckless. Indeed, poor woman, she had no such desire, for she was crushed, prostrated, all a-tremble at that terrible thought of being shut up with lunatics.

They reached Henriette's just at twilight, and climbed the stairs of an apartment house for working-people, the pervious stones of which seemed permeated with a variety of odors, of which they could distinguish only that of the warm bread that arose from the bakery in the basement, and the scent of paint and turpentine that exhaled from a room on the second floor, on the door of which was the sign:

Magnabos. — Decorator.

A woman of youngish appearance, wearing a large student's apron, her forehead bound in a

compress moistened with sedative water, opened the door for them, her palette in one hand, and a gilding knife in the other.

"Mademoiselle Briss? Yes, she is here. She will be back soon . . . she has only gone out to get her dinner. . . ."

A streak of light came into the ante-room through the open door of a long atelier, in which there were hundreds of little statuettes, glittering in gilt and altar colorings. At one side, opening from this atelier, was Henriette's room, into which the visitors were shown. The disorder of the little room; the unmade bed, piled with newspapers; the plate, knife, and fork on the wooden table beside the ink-stand, and scattered over with sheets of paper filled with irregular writing and big splashes of ink; the large beads of a rosary hanging over the mirror above a little Saint John, his white lamb with a ribbon around its neck dingy with undisturbed dust, — all this told an eloquent story of the singular, erratic life, stranded in this cell-like room, that overlooked the narrow little court, lighted up at night by the flaming basement window of the bakery. At arm's length from the window was a gloomy wall, on which the mould and constant drippings from the roof had traced a regular line of hieroglyphics, easily legible. From top to bottom, from side to side, the words were: Sickness, poverty . . . sickness, poverty . . . sickness and poverty.

"Oh, it is you. . . . How nice! . . ."

Henriette had come in, with a loaf of bread, and

a little dish that the baker had cooked for her in his oven. As soon as she had heard the story, she offered her room and her bed. She would sleep on the couch, and Mme. Ebsen might pass for one of her aunts from Christiania.

"You will see how comfortable we are here, what good people are these Magnabos. The man is a free-thinker, but he is clever and intelligent. . . . We have such discussions. . . . Besides, there are no children, you know."

She rattled on, tossing Mme. Ebsen's things helter-skelter into a bureau drawer, lighting a small petroleum lamp, and adding an extra plate, chipped at the edges, and a pewter knife and fork, to all the confusion on the table. Lorie left them eating their dinner, the mother feeling a little calmer now that she was safe, and Henriette still chattering, less excited by the arrival of a guest than by the air of Paris, which was far too violent and composite for that poor unsettled brain.

As for Lorie, Paris frightened him this evening. He had never before sounded its depths, its treachery, as he had done to-day, and as he returned after dinner to the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, it seemed as if the very ground beneath his feet trembled with subterranean mines. Those extraordinary things of which one reads are, then, possible. He knew perfectly well that Mme. Ebsen was not insane. Would they really have dared to incarcerate her, or was it only a threat to keep her quiet? Some one was sitting on his doorstep, waiting for him. He thought of the

man who had called that morning, and, without approaching, called out quickly:

"Who is there?"

Romain's voice, low, hoarse, disconsolate, answered him. Romain in Paris at this late hour! What could be the matter? This was Romain's story:

Having that morning received notice of his dismissal for irregularity of service, the lock-keeper had hastened at once to the Engineer's office, thinking there might be some error, but he had been unable to obtain any information. Irregularity of service! and Baraquin was to replace him. He wondered how regular the service would be now! Lorie had a name on the tip of his tongue, but Romain saved him the trouble of pronouncing it.

"Of course . . . the Authemans are at the bottom of it all . . . bad people they are, much worse than artillery-men."

For some time, it seemed, open warfare had existed between the château and the lock. And young Nicolas in one of his attacks having even ventured within the enemy's territory, he had received from Sylvanire such a sound drubbing as to lay him up for a week. Thereupon followed a suit, and Sylvanire had been summoned to the court at Corbeil. This, however, had caused no neglect of his duty on the part of the lock-keeper, who seemed, indeed, less distressed at the loss of his position than at the thought that they were no longer to be together. "The children would now return to Monsieur, and Sylvanire, of course,

with them. He knew it, and was resigned; but all the same . . . And, as the clock on Saint-Jacques was striking the hour, and he did not wish to miss his train, Romain, mopping his tearful little eyes, took leave, summing up his great misfortune with his characteristic: "Bless' pig, Monsieur Lorie! . . ."

Life at the Magnabos home was very sad and lonely for Mme. Ebsen. Henriette gadded about all day, visiting convents and churches, greatly excited by the famous decrees concerning public assemblies, which were soon to go into effect. The poor mother, not daring to venture out, fretted herself to death in that room, which all her attentions failed to render habitable, in which her turbulent companion rushed in and out like a whirlwind a dozen times a day. What a contrast to the quiet little lodging in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce? No diversion but to decipher the mould on the walls . . . Sickness . . . Poverty . . . or to pass an hour in the atelier of her neighbor.

Magnabos, from Ariège, was a stout, stocky, bearded man, anywhere between thirty-five and fifty, with eyelids like a frog's, and a deep, sonorous voice! He was quite a celebrity at public meetings, and numbered among his companions the habitués of the Hall in the Rue d'Arras, but he excelled especially in funeral orations. No civil burial of any importance took place where Magnabos did not deliver a discourse, and, as

these functions were not so frequent as he would have liked, he had united with a Masonic lodge composed of free-thinkers, where he watched over the aged, and visited the sick, taking their measure for a funeral oration just as he would have done for a pine coffin, knowing exactly just what points each could furnish for an impressive eulogy. Then, with an immortelle in his buttonhole, and wearing over his shoulder the broad blue ribbon of his lodge, through the wind, rain, and sun, in all seasons, Magnabos trudged, and, pompous, authoritative, stood by the edge of the grave and said something, — no great thing, to be sure, but something.

In all this there was something suggestive of the priest. His language assumed a certain unction, his gestures were commanding. He, the enemy of priests, became one, the priest of free-thought. He followed their rites and ritual, and received in return their stipend, — good breakfasts and his railroad fare, at the expense of the relatives, for Magnabos delivered his funeral orations as far as Poissy, Nantes, and Vernon. Ah! if the free-thinkers had but known the real occupation of their High-Priest, a painter of religious emblems, and decorator of all that pasteboard statuary that fills the windows of the clerical shops in the Rues Napoléon and Saint-Sulpice! But then, one must live; besides, Magnabos occupied himself very little with his "manitous," as he called them. The real decorator was his wife, who knew how to lay on the mixture and gilding as well as he.

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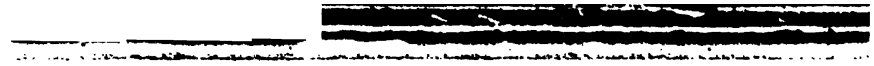
Goupil & Cie Paris



Mathilde, with curly hair like Saint John, whom she could keep by her side in the atelier, for she was sometimes a little lonely. But what was the use! There is always some sorrow in the happiest existence.

"You have never had any children, have you, Madame?" she asked one day of Henriette's pretended aunt.

"Yes," replied Mme. Ebsen, softly.

"A girl?"

Receiving no answer, she turned, and saw the poor woman, her face buried in her hands, shaken with sobs.

"That is why she is so sad, . . . why she never goes out."

And, supposing that her neighbor's daughter was dead, Mme. Magnabos never from that day spoke of her little Mathilde.

The evening brought back Henriette Briss, and sometimes Magnabos, when work was pressing and he had no meeting to attend. In the large work-room, crossed by the elbowed stove-pipe of a little stove, always red and roaring, although the weather was already mild, so that the coloring would dry more quickly, the big man worked beside his wife, his hair smoothly plastered with pomade, his jet-black beard falling over a long gray blouse which he filled with the sacerdotal majesty of a pope; but although serious and priest-like, he did not disdain to crack a joke.

"Come here, and let me stick a halo on you!" he would say, pouncing on some bishop, and plant-

ing it comically before him; and the same joke often repeated, always evoked a burst of laughter from his wife, and a protest from Henriette:

"Ah! Monsieur Magnabos—"

And with that the discussion began.

The basso profundo of the funeral orator, and the thin, flighty voice of the former Sister of Charity rose, fell, and paused, and through the high windows, open on the crowded street, noisy with the roar of omnibuses and carts, the words *Eternity*, *Matter*, *Superstition*, *Sensuality*, floated out as from the windows of some chapel, with those melopœia which swell the last syllable.

Both, atheist and believer, made use of the same terminology, made quotations from the Church Fathers or from the Encyclopedia; only, Magnabos never lost his temper, like Henriette. He denied authoritatively the existence of God, while at the same time he mixed chrome yellow, and with his large brush colored the beard of Saint Joseph or the tresses of Saint Perpetua.

Lorie-Dufresne sometimes mingled his soothing voice in this chorus. Having but recently investigated Protestantism, his information concerning that religion was fresh and vivid, and he expressed his opinions with all the reserve of his official language. While intending to calm them, his condescending intonation exasperated the two contending parties.

Seated in a dark corner, so that she could weep unseen, as still and motionless as the rows of little saints, with their resigned faces outlined on the white wall, Mme. Ebsen sadly thought of how

little importance were all these differences in religion, since men made use of them all to serve their own wicked and unjust ends; and, as if in an evil dream, she heard Magnabos thunder the announcement that good days had now come, and that the day of immunities had run its course.

Magnabos was mistaken. Over the ruins of those ancient immunities, there remains one, of more importance than all the rest, a tyranny higher than laws and revolutions, itself augmented by the formidable destruction which it causes around it, — that is, Fortune, the real force of modern times, which unconsciously and without effort levels all things. Ah! yes, without the least effort. And the poor mother, obliged to hide, like some criminal, and the old Dean, dismissed from his post, and the honest Romain, ignominiously driven from his lock, never suspect how little attention the Authemans give to their misfortunes. It has all been managed from without, by those below them, by the natural force of things, by the power of money, and the universal prostration before the idol. And, while these base and cruel works are carried out in their name, they continue to live honorable, peaceful lives, — Madame at Port-Sauveur, enjoying the lovely days of early spring; the banker behind his window, at the source of the crystal river, continuous and inexhaustible, which upholds the great stream of gold on a level with its lofty banks.

Every day at five o'clock Autheman's coupé comes for him, and carries him with all speed to

his wife. Nothing could be more punctual than this departure, by which the clerks regulate their watches and relax their countenances, darkened by the presence of their employer. Therefore the surprise is great, when, one afternoon in June, they see him leave his office promptly at three o'clock.

"I am going upstairs," he observes, as he passes the clerks. . . . "When Pierre comes with the carriage, let me be called."

"Monsieur is not ill?"

No, Monsieur is not more ill than usual. Slowly, and with a preoccupied gesture touching and rubbing his swollen cheek, he ascends the broad stairs, and along the hall his lingering, discouraged footsteps echo, as if in an old church. He enters a large room, to which the closed blinds and the absence of carpets and draperies give an appearance of even greater vastness and solemnity, passes through the parlor in which the prayer-meetings are held, all its benches now piled along the walls, which are covered with Scriptural quotations. Then, going through an office filled with green pasteboard boxes arranged in perfect order, he crosses the pompous *salon*, with its furnishings in the style of the First Empire, the covers on the sofas and chairs having a short-waisted look, like the woman's gowns of that period, and stops at last before a door, lofty and with carvings of severe style.

His wife's room!

For four years this door has been closed upon a happiness that has been obstinately refused him.

At first there were polite excuses, fatigue, headaches, pretexts which women invoke when they like; then a simple, unexplained refusal, and the bolt drawn solidly, firmly, in these walls of the olden time. He made no protest, wishing only to do his duty to his wife. But how many times in the dark night he has frozen in this great *salon*, as he has in the corridors down at Port-Sauveur, just to hear the even, peaceful breathing of his Jeanne. He thought: "She has had enough of me. It is horror . . . loathing . . ." and renewing the attempts of his youth, he once more gave up his cheek to the surgeons, but the frightful, hereditary spot remained rebellious to all treatment. Operations were equally unsuccessful. Cut away, and supposed to be extirpated, the evil reappeared, each time more hideous than before, spreading like some huge livid spider over one side of his face. Then, seized with rage, as if to humiliate in his heart that love which would have nothing more to do with him, Autheman tried licentiousness.

When, among the fast denizens of the boulevards, it was learned that the wealthy Autheman was entering on the chase, there was a grand flurry, a hunt worthy of royal forests. But this refined lover of a chaste woman had never had any initiation into vice. The first one who was brought to him, a girl of eighteen, firm and succulent as some beautiful fruit, at sight of the man whom she must caress, was seized with wild terror, and covered her face in her bare arm.

"I am afraid," she said, shivering.

And he, in pity for this white-skinned slave on sale, said:

"Dress yourself again; you shall have your money just the same."

Another threw herself on his neck, enveloping him in a passionate embrace. This one he could have killed. Assuredly, for him the world holds but one woman, his wife, and she no longer loves him. This is why he has decided to die.

Yes, death, that last resource of the disowned; a violent death, frightful and avenging, one of those reckless suicides that bespatter with human fragments the corners of the sidewalks and cornices, the spiked iron gratings of monuments, in which the life, embittered by cruel misery and incurable suffering, goes in a groan and a blasphemy. This is the death he has chosen. He will kill himself this very evening, down there, near her. But before he dies, he has wished to see again, for the last time, her room.

It is a spacious chamber, daintily hung in silk of tender gray. The woodwork, of almost the same shade, has threads of gold running through it. The immateriality of the woman who dwells there may be divined by the purity of the hangings, and the furniture, lacquered over in the same dove-like tint. Everything is as fresh as on their wedding night, eleven years ago. Poor Autheman, without prænomen, — for no one, not even his mother, had ever dreamed of calling him Louis, — poor Autheman, the wealthy, poor, hideous man! Throwing

himself headlong upon the bed of his beloved, draped as if for death, what cries of anger and of passion he stifles, biting the pillow and tearing the heavy curtain! And who, seeing him there, weeping aloud like a child, would believe him to be the same Autheman whom his servant finds a moment later, standing gloved, correct, and cold, in the anteroom, before the parrot's cage?

Every year the bird and the cage have made the trip to Port-Sauveur, to the great scandal of Anne de Beuil, who was enraged to hear the hooked-beaked old heretic calling "Moses—Moses . . ." beneath those Evangelical shades. This time, intentionally or otherwise, the parrot has been forgotten; and now he lies in the bottom of his cage, his head thrown back, his stiffened claws drawn up, before the little broken mirror which reflects his empty bathing-tub and feed-jar. There will be no more calls for Moses, nothing more of Israel remains in the house of the renegade. For a moment Autheman looks at the bird, passes from the room with no feeling of anger, and consulting his watch, says coolly to the coachman:

"I am hurried, Pierre . . ."

The coupé hastens on, dashing along the streets, past the quays, past the gloomy Faubourg d'Ivry, black from its charcoal shops, its workmen's hovels, and the heavy smoke from its manufactories. A neighborhood of poverty and sedition, where the few carriages that pass are greeted with handfuls of dirt and mud thrown into the windows. The banker's coupé, however, is well-known in the Ivry

quartier, for it is seen there every day, and he has nothing to fear from without; yet the blinds are drawn as closely as if it were a lepers' retreat, even when it has left the city and the route lies between fields of colza, and meadows waving their golden grain in the bright June sunshine. It is thus that this rich man travels, at liberty only when the gate has turned on its hinges, and he can breathe in freedom the honeyed odor of the paulonias floating in the torpid silence of Port-Sauveur.

"Where is Madame?" he asks, while his horse snorts, and proudly rattles his shining harness, his bit silvered with foam.

"In the park . . . at Gabrielle's Seat . . ."

On this moss-covered circular seat, which nestles at the head of the stairway, where the two balustrades unite, and hidden, like a nest, in the branches of an old linden-tree, the beautiful Gabrielle had doubtless on just such evenings as this, the warm, fragrant air filled with the humming of bees, often spoken of love, and sighed as she listened to tender words and gallant declarations. For Jeanne Autheman, however, it is merely an observatory. When not at the Retreat, holding communion with God, she watches, through the branches of this leafy bower, the movements of her domestic train, the straight rows of hedges, the lines of blossoming flower-beds, the kitchen-garden, whose bell-glasses shine along each side of the railroad track. The servants know this, and when "Madame is in her arbor" the château seems more austere, more severe than usual.

"The soul that wishes to be united to God must forget all created things, all perishable beings."

It is the cold voice of his wife that the banker hears as he ascends the high winding stairs. Watson's sobs answer her; poor Watson, who has returned from her mission, more heart-broken, more despairing, than ever, with the memory of her children gnawing and crying at her heart. Jeanne is vexed, and scolds her, wholly unmoved by those tears, for she has received from Christ the *gift of fortitude.*

"Good afternoon," she says to Autheman, hurriedly lifting her forehead to him, that she may continue the conversation; but he, in the tone of a master, replies:

"I have something to say to you, Jeanne . . ."

By his flashing eyes, and the nervous manner in which he grasps her hand, she realizes that the hour has come for the explanation she has so long deferred.

"Go, my child . . ." she says to Watson; then waits, with that expression of mingled weariness and dread seen on the face of a woman who loves not, and who yet knows that some one has come to speak of love. Seated by her side, Autheman murmurs:

"Why do you withdraw your hand, Jeanne? Why do you take back that which you have given me? Yes, yes, you understand — Do not look at me with those eyes that deceive. . . . You were once mine. . . . Why have you turned from me?"

Then, in burning, impetuous words, he tries to

make her understand what she has been in his life. After a childhood of solitude and illness, a joyless youth, when he dreaded to let himself be seen, and when he yet felt the overpowering need of love, with the horrible sensation of the hideous insect which retreats under the stones for fear of being crushed, — after such an existence as this, she had appeared to him one day, and in such a halo of light that he had felt reanimated, alive once more. Even the tortures that his love had cost him, the anguish he had suffered, when, watching her from the other side of the hedge with Deborah, he had said to himself, "She will never look at me. . . ." even that was sweet, since she was its cause.

"Do you remember, Jeanne, when my mother went to ask you to become my wife? . . . I passed the afternoon here, on this very seat, waiting her return. I was not impatient; on the contrary, I was very calm. I said to myself:

"'If she will not consent, I die.' . . . I had decided how. All my plans were made. . . . Very well, look at me. . . . You know that I am not a man of many words. You see me again before you, just as I was eleven years ago, firm in my resolution to die if you refuse me. . . . The hour and the place are decided upon. . . . Speak."

She knows that he is serious, entirely sincere, and refrains from uttering the "no" which he can, nevertheless, read in the decision of her eyes, in the instinctive withdrawal of her whole being. Gently she reminds him of his Christian

duty, of the faith which assuages all sorrows, of the law of God that forbids us to take our own lives.

"God! . . . But you are my God. . . ."

And with kisses rather than with words, he stammers passionately:

"Your lips, your breath, your arms which have embraced me, your breast on which I have slept . . . these are God to me. In that temple to which you have led me, before those long columns of figures on which I fix my burning eyes, I have no thought but of you. You inspired me with courage to work, with fervor for prayer. And now you have abandoned me. . . . How do you expect me to believe? How do you expect me to live?"

She starts to her feet, indignant that one should dare to blaspheme thus in her presence. A blush mounts to her cheeks, a flame of that holy anger which the Scriptures allow. . . . *Be angry, and sin not.*

"Enough, not another word. I thought you understood me. God and my work! Nothing else exists for me. . . ."

She is beautiful as she stands thus, quivering with excitement, — she whom nothing has power to move, — and the pale blossoms of the linden-tree fallen in becoming disorder on her hair.

For a moment he looks at her in admiration, gazing upon her face with that terrifying expression of irony imparted by his bandage. Is it really God who is the obstacle, or is it his own monstrous

ugliness? In any case, he knows her. He understands that her "no" is implacable.

"I felt very sure," he says, rising, and resuming his customary manner, his usual cold, calm, business-like tone,—"I felt very sure that it was entirely useless to speak to you on this subject, but I was unwilling that there should be any misunderstanding between us."

He takes two steps, as if to go away, then pauses:

"Then you will never? . . ."

"Never."

Where is he going? . . . He looks at his watch, and hastens toward the house like a man who is afraid of missing an appointment. Ah! let him go. God will punish the rebellious spirit. Without giving herself further concern about him, she prays, to calm the agitation of her mind, to efface the stain left on her soul by this brutal appeal to earthliness. She prays and is soothed, while night steals tremulously among the trees, and great night-moths replace the butterflies that hover over the geraniums in the garden. Little by little, all grows indistinct, and then invisible in the moonless night. She can see nothing now but the railroad track, straight and smooth under the rumbling light of two fiery globes placed at the turn of the Seine.

The evening express!

It passes, with a lightning flash and a thundering roar, and Jeanne, for whom it is the signal for dinner, slowly descends the stairs, murmuring the last words of her prayer. She watches it disappear

into the night, without suspecting that it has just made her a widow.

He was found the same evening by the men who swing the signal lanterns for departing and incoming trains. His hat, gloves, and cane were carefully laid on the parapet of the terrace. The body had been dragged a long distance, horribly mutilated, and thrown in fragments on each side of the track. The head alone was intact, and beyond the protecting bandage the loathsome malady, more visible and more frightful than ever, the spider, with its long, clutching claws, still livid, had seized its prey at last.

XVII.

"LET US LOVE EACH OTHER DEARLY . . . LET US NEVER PART."

MME. Ebsen was beginning to go out a little and to feel somewhat reassured. The D'Arlots had returned to Paris, and would protect her in case any serious step should be taken to confine her. It was necessary, however, for her to be very prudent, for the frightful accident that had happened to the banker, the dignified courage of his widow, and her superior intelligence in continuing the business, like a true daughter-in-law of old Mother Autheman, were all changing public opinion in her favor. The poor mother was, moreover, now crushed, humbled, by dread, and that tedious waiting which had lasted for months; she was quite ready to say, in the hopeless tone of the peasant woman at Petit-Port:

"There is nothing to be done . . ."

Not daring yet to return to the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, she continued to occupy, but alone, Henriette's room, for the latter, having reached the end of her resources, had just left for Podolia. Mme. Ebsen, also, had exhausted her little savings, and was obliged once more to take up teaching. This served as a distraction during the day, but

the long, dreary evenings made her almost regret the absence of her turbulent friend, especially now that Magnabos had fallen ill. The funeral orator, having taken a chill at the last interment, was now suffering from a severe feverish cold and a hollow cough that shook the little manitous on their shelves. The physician had forbidden him to speak; and Mme. Magnabos, while continuing to lay on the color, was obliged to submit to the ill-temper of her sick husband, who was enraged at the idea that his brothers were dying and being buried without his assistance.

Sorrow upon sorrow, Mme. Ebsen remained in her kennel, looking out upon the high wall where the mould was becoming deeper and deeper; and the thought of her daughter, now that she no longer feared the cell of the insane asylum, returned persistently to her mind. She wondered:

"Where is she? What is she doing?"

Receiving no more letters, she read the old ones again and again, those cold, cruel letters, and that postal card, across the face of which she had written: *Last letter from my child.* It seemed to her that she would now be content even with that, with one line, with one word: Éline.

Lorie, also, was absent, having been summoned several days ago to Amboise, to settle up the affairs of the Gailletons, who had died within two weeks of each other. In his absence she went furtively to Mother Blot, to learn if there were any news; but she did not linger, refraining from going up to her apartment, and even from stop-

ping long enough to kiss Maurice and Fanny, who had remained in Paris with Sylvanire. She was in constant dread of some one on the watch to carry her off, and as she hurried along the deserted street, she looked around a dozen times.

One day, half-opening the door, with her eternal, mournful question: "Nothing for me, Mother Blot?" the *concierge* flew toward her, her face distorted with emotion.

"Why, yes . . . why, yes . . . your daughter is upstairs . . . She has just come . . ."

Where did she find the strength to climb the stairs, to turn the key that was still in the lock, and to drag her limbs as far as the *salon?*

"My child . . . my little girl . . . "

She took her in her arms, unable to speak, her tears falling gently on Éline's hair, while the daughter allowed herself to be embraced, looking pale, cold, and so very thin in her black straw hat and long, shabby waterproof.

"Oh! my pretty little Lina," murmured the mother, standing off at a little distance that she might see her. "They have changed you entirely."

And, clinging again to her neck, the mother sobbed, and gasped for breath like one who has been rescued from drowning and who drinks in air and life.

"Do not leave me again . . . Say that you will not . . . I cannot bear it."

Holding her child to her heart, so that her reproaches were softened by caresses, she told her of her great suffering, her desperate journeys, and of how they had wished to shut her up as a lunatic.

"Hush . . . hush!" said Éline. "God has permitted me to return. Let us thank him without complaining."

"Yes, you are right . . ."

Her child returned, she forgot everything else. Even had the infamous Birk entered the room, she would have kissed him on his Judas beard. . . . Just to think! to have her to herself, to hold her in her arms, to hear once more her gentle footstep in the reanimated house, where she had opened all the windows to the sunshine; to follow her from room to room in the confusion of the arrival, to open together the trunks and drawers, to sit opposite her at the little improvised dinner, with hands clasped and eyes meeting, as they used to, across the table. What anger, what resentment could have held out against such joy as this!

In the garden, lighted up by the golden glow of the setting sun, could be heard the gay laughter of the little Lories at play. Ever since the sign "To Let," on a large placard, had hung on the pastor's closed summer-house, the children had enjoyed foraging in the borders and flower-beds. But Éline was not thinking of them, did not even distinguish their cries from those of the sparrows twittering in the trees; and Mme. Ebsen, not knowing what her daughter intended to do, did not

dare to speak, for fear of frightening her, of shattering this fragile and surprising happiness. One has such frights, even in the most beautiful dreams.

She ventured, however, to speak of the Dean. Poor man! how his heart must have ached to be torn from that peaceful spot, from that garden which his own hands had planted, to abandon his splendid roses, so dear to him, and his old cherry-tree, from which he plucked with such precautions its few sour cherries, real Parisian cherries they were, covered with black dust which had to be washed off and wiped before placing on the table! And Mme. Ebsen pictured the departure of the old householder, going off behind his furniture, that also having reached the end of its service, and asking only for repose; she fancied him stopping somewhere in the country with one of his married sons, until he should find a modest charge where he would renew all the privations of his early ministry. And all this for her, because he alone in Paris had dared to raise his voice against cruelty and injustice.

"Ah! Linette, if you had only heard him that day in the temple. . . . How beautiful it was, how near he seemed to God. . . . You would have come home at once, naughty child. . . ." And fearing that she had vexed her, she took the child's hand and kissed it tenderly over the table. "I am only joking, you know, dear. . . ."

Éline did not reply; she seemed absent, absorbed, a look of weariness and suffering on the

drawn, pale face. The mother thought: "It is the journey," and, in spite of her silence, began to question her, for she was curious to know where her child had been; but the responses that she elicited were only vague and embarrassed. At Zurich she had been ill for a month. She had accomplished much good at Manchester. . . . From time to time she uttered some Biblical quotation, made some pious exhortation: "Let us suffer in Christ, my mother, that we may reign with Him." And the mother said to herself again and again:

"Oh! my pretty little Lina, they have changed her entirely. . . ."

However, the essential thing was to have her there, near by, in her little room, where Lina retired early, pleading fatigue. Mme. Ebsen, on the contrary, sat up late, for she was eager to become settled once more and to resume their old habits in the dear home, so long abandoned. Every few minutes she would stop in the midst of her work, with the delicious feeling that peace had returned, that the house was again occupied after so many hours of despair and solitude.

The street was sleeping. Above the trees in the garden the clock on Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas was solemnly striking the hour, mingling its note with the fragmentary repetition of the violins at Bullier's. No sound came from Éline's room. However, her light was still burning. "She must have forgotten to put it out," thought Mme. Ebsen, and she entered the room softly. The young

girl was kneeling on the rug, her head thrown back and her arms extended rigidly in an attitude of invocation. At the sound of the opening door, without turning her head, she said harshly:

"Leave me with God, mother. . . ."

The mother rushed forward and folded her in a passionate embrace:

"No, no, not that, my darling child. . . . Do not be angry . . . you would then leave me again. . . ."

And, suddenly releasing Éline from her arms, and falling with all the weight of her stout body upon her knees, she cried:

"See! I will pray with you. . . . Say aloud all that I ought to say."

When the sun shines on the house, there is warmth enough for each floor. Would it be the same with happiness? Two days after Éline's arrival, Mme. Ebsen received a letter from Lorie, announcing that he was beyond a doubt the heir of his cousins Gailleton. The income was his during his lifetime only, but there was the house, which he hoped to sell, and the farm and cottage in which he meant to settle the children, with Romain and Sylvanire. He was now writing in the room of his martyred wife, its windows opening out upon the huge tower of the château. Maurice would continue at the grammar school of Amboise his studies for Navale. Poor *Borda* pupil! he was a victim of his vocation. After telling the news in a postscript, timidly, Lorie-Dufresne added:

"You have found your child again. I think that in this great happiness that has come to you, if there had been a little for me, you would have written me. But I wish you to know and to tell her that my heart is unchanged, and that my little ones are still motherless."

This, with its tender ingenuousness and foreign expressions, is the letter that Mme. Ebsen sent in reply:

"Lorie, my friend, she is my child, and yet not my child. Gentle and submissive, she is ready to do anything I wish, but cold, absent, as if something within her were broken. It is her heart, you see, that has stopped moving. Sometimes I take her in my arms, and hold her close to my body to warm her. I cry to her: 'But, my darling, I have no one but you. . . . What is life, if we no longer love each other?' She does not reply, or else she tells me that we must love each other in God, and that the salvation of our souls should be our only concern. She takes no interest in anything else, and when she is at home spends all her time in prayer and edifying reading.

"The first few days, she went out to see all our friends, and showed herself everywhere. Now, however, she no longer goes out, and does not even speak of resuming her lessons. I do not know what she intends to do, but meanwhile I work for us both. Oh! just as long as she wishes, *mon Dieu;* for since she returned, I feel as if I were twenty. Concerning yourself, I am sorry that I have no more encouraging news to tell you. When I received your letter, I went down to get Fanny, whom she had not yet seen. I hoped that when she saw the dear child, with her pretty little ways, and her silky hair that she used to like to arrange, her heart would be

touched. Ah! well, I was mistaken. Éline received her as if she had been a stranger, with one of those icy kisses that she gives me; she talked of nothing but God and the necessity of the Gospel to the poor little creature, who was trembling with fear and clinging to my skirts.

"And yet, I have not given up all hope of curing my daughter of this frightful malady of no longer being able to love; it is a work of time and tenderness. But last night — I was weeping silently in my bed, for indeed it is most grievous to lose one's child while she is still living — I thought I heard a moan in the next room. I rose, and ran in to Lina, who was lying in the darkness, but not asleep. I cried:

"'What is the matter, my darling?'

"'Why, nothing, nothing at all —' she replied; but when I kissed her, I felt her cheeks wet with cold tears.

"Ah! my friend, is there anything more piteous than this mother and this daughter silently weeping, with no word of confidence, and the darkness between them? Nevertheless she has wept! Perhaps her heart is again coming to life. And if she gives me back her love, she will give it also to you and your children."

It was the fifteenth of July, about three weeks after Éline's return to her mother. Mme. Ebsen, who had been to say good-bye to the last one of her pupils who yet remained in Paris, had gone a short distance out of her way to inquire after Magnabos' health.

"Bad, very bad . . . " rattled the funeral orator from the depths of his arm-chair. He had lost his voice, and turning with difficulty to his wife, whose

silent tears were moistening the blue robe of Saint Rigobert, he articulated:

"Above all, I beg that there shall be no address at my grave. . . . I do not wish it. . . . There is no one who knows how to deliver it."

Then, becoming excited over the national *fête* of the previous evening:

"Hey! You saw it, of course, Madame Ebsen? Was n't it fine! Did n't they applaud? How pleased the people were!"

"Yes. I heard the applause from a distance, but saw nothing of it. Lina did not care to go out."

Magnabos was greatly incensed:

"Did not care to go out? But this was our special *fête*, the *fête* of the children, the *fête* of the people, the end of superstitions and immunities. *Des lampions! Des lampions!*[1] In the name of thunder!"

"My dear—my dear," cried poor Mme. Magnabos, fearing he would bring on a hemorrhage from his remaining lung. And her entreating eyes made Mme. Ebsen leave at once. She returned home through streets where the decorations were still hanging, the flags, emblems, and garlands of leaves all dripping with rain that had fallen in the night.

Was it the sight of this dying man, and the sorrow of the brave wife, and perhaps, also, the

[1] *Des lampions!* A cry that expresses the impatience of a crowd, emphasized by stamping the feet. There is no exact equivalent for the expression in English. — TRANSLATOR.

melancholy that follows the day succeeding a *fête?* Whatever the cause, Mme. Ebsen experienced a sudden feeling of uneasiness; her limbs were enervated by the oppression of the sultry air. The Luxembourg, through which she passed, seemed vast and sinister, with the bare scaffoldings still standing, and tall green poles splintered and blackened, from which hung tri-colored candle-ends, in small oil-cups. Big lanterns of orange paper rolled on the ground at the foot of the charred trees, where the dust from a neighboring public-house ball was still floating. She hastened on, anxious to escape from this dismal street scene, and to be at home to embrace her child.

"Lina! Lina!"

The door of Éline's room was locked, and it was not until she had tapped twice that it was opened. There stood the young girl, dressed, ready to go out, looking whiter than ever in the broad black ribbon tied under her chin to hold her hat on. Near her, on a chair, were her valise and a few small articles of travel, all ready for departure.

"Éline! What does this mean?"

"God calls me, mother . . . I am going to him."

Oh! this time the mother had no cry to utter, no tear to shed. She understood the infamous farce, that, as an answer to the accusations of old Aussandon, the young girl had been allowed to return for a time to her home, in order to show

herself among her friends and to prove that she was free, and not shut up and coerced. Having produced this impression, even at the risk of killing her mother, she must go!

After all she had endured, it was too much.

"Very well! then go . . . I no longer have a child. . . ."

She said the words in a lifeless voice, terrible to hear. After this the two woman remained standing, without a word, without even a glance, waiting for the carriage that Lina had ordered.

It was an age, it was a flash, as impossible to measure as the moment when one dies.

"Farewell, mother . . . I will write to you . . ." said Éline.

The mother replied only:

"Farewell."

Mechanically their cheeks touched, in a kiss as cold and icy as the marble floor of a temple. But in this brief contact the flesh was moved and cried out, and the mother heard from the depths of Eline's heart, as if it were all that remained of her child, a stifled sob.

"Stay then!" she begged, with arms outstretched.

But Éline, terrified and in a hollow voice, exclaimed:

"No, no; it is for your salvation and mine. . . . I can save you only by tearing myself away."

Mme. Ebsen, standing rooted to the spot, hears the light footstep descending the stairs.

And without the daughter's turning to look out

of the window, and without the mother's lifting the curtain to exchange one last farewell, the carriage jolts over the stones, turns the corner, and is lost among the thousand other carriages that rumble through the streets of Paris.

They never saw each other again . . . never.

ALPHONSE DAUDET

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